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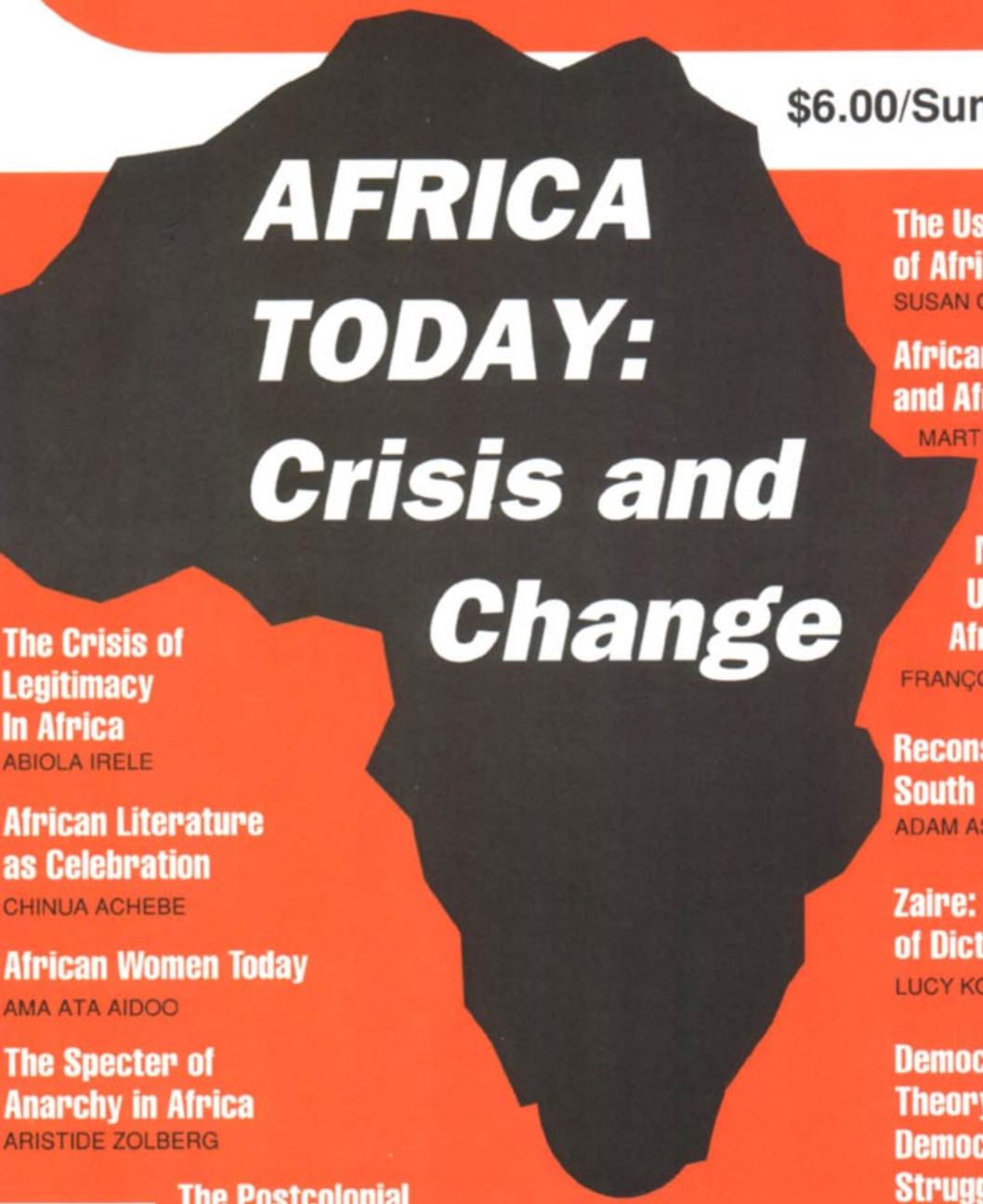

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AFRICA: CRISIS AND CHANGE

Edited by Mitchell Cohen and Martin Kilson

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Africa

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Martin Kilson and Mitchell Cohen

AFRICA: CRISIS AND CHANGE

Introducing the Issues

This special issue of *Dissent* devotes itself entirely to Africa today. In the past three years the world has altered fundamentally, and virtually everywhere across Africa there is a dialectic of crisis and change at work. Old regimes and ideas are being contested, new political voices are being heard, novel social and economic realities are in the making. Unhappily, the immediate prospects don't seem particularly bright; indeed, some are potentially devastating. A watchword among African intellectuals and informed observers nowadays is "Afro-pessimism."

The Western press pays only modest attention to African developments (apart, of course, from the great drama of South Africa). However, a process is under way that draws on many ingredients at a time of rapid global transformation. Here is a preliminary list:

- the oppressive political and shallow developmental legacies of European imperialism;
- the cultural complexities of African societies;
- blistering poverty, hunger and disease (now including a calamitous AIDS epidemic);
- the repressive, corrupt, and inefficient governance of African states by their own elites after independence;
- a crisis of political legitimacy, due to the above factors;
- changes in the world economy and obdurate—often brutal—demands made of Africans by Western financial powers such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank;
- the prospect that South Africa may be finally rid of its heinous apartheid system, yet still faces an uncertain, possibly tumultuous future;
- and, of course, the end of the cold war, the collapse of the "second world," and the apparent failure of third worldism.

This list only hints at the complexity of the situation. Just consider the circumstances faced by the millions upon millions of agrarian laborers and urban workers who compose the vast majority of the populations in Black Africa's forty-two states. On the most basic level, there is a crisis of agricultural production, in terms of both cash crops and production of food for subsistence. This is due partly to the long-term impact of colonial agrarian policies but also to the practices of independent African governments and their ruling classes, who too often fashioned more disincentives than incentives for agrarian producers. At the same time, world commodity markets and the transnational capitalist structures of which they are a part have played havoc with incentive systems available to African agrarian producers. Add to this the vagaries, often cruel, of climatic changes, which, in Africa, leave precious little room for human errors—be they errors by regimes or international lending institutions. Immediately one thinks of the deep and frequent droughts in the West African Sahel region in the 1970s and 1980s, or those in the northeast, in the Horn of Africa (Somalia and Ethiopia), none of which could be governed by world market forces. In short: an intricate interplay of governmental, world market, and climatic realities has spawned a developmental crisis in agriculture.

Linked to this crisis is a plethora of related political and social crises. Destitution is overwhelming in contemporary Africa. The continent now claims nearly 20 percent of the third world's poor population. A dramatic

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downturn in government revenues from exports of cash crops began in the late 1970s, partly due to declining world commodity prices. This compelled many African states to cut back severely on already limited public services, especially expenditures for education and literacy. (African countries have the world's highest illiteracy rates.) Combine all these elements and it is not surprising that there is a frightening expansion of disenchanted citizens—peasants and workers—who are increasingly averse to "modernity." Its emotional, ethical, and cultural costs seem prohibitive to them.

Longstanding, deeply rooted human values—of family, of kinship, of communal reciprocity—have been stretched painfully, sometimes to the breaking point, leaving millions of Africans in a state of cultural limbo, of what Durkheim called anomie. It is a situation ripe for the type of dysfunctional political movements that Kenneth Jowitt recently called "movements of rage." Such movements are typically restorationist, looking backward to a traditionalist "golden age" and rejecting pragmatic accommodation to modernity. The rejection is frequently accompanied by nihilistic violence.

Fortunately, there are elements of civil society in Africa that are attentive to this emerging cultural crisis. They can be found especially among egalitarian-minded professionals (writers, artists, journalists, some lawyers, and others). Noteworthy is the role played by Africa's educated women (together with uneducated women who are small traders) in challenging governments and elites to confront cultural anomie.

The African state is at the very center of the dialectic of crisis and change sweeping Africa. Several articles in this issue of *Dissent* are particularly concerned with the predicament of the African state. The colonial regimes (British, French, Belgian, Portuguese) were, of course, authoritarian, and they bequeathed an authoritarian inheritance to African politics. True, representative or participatory political methods (for example, elections, parties, and so on) were part of the decolonization process in most of Anglophone and Francophone Africa. But this was a shallow experience, especially in institutional terms. It could not diminish colonialism's powerful statist legacy, one adverse to the healthy development of civil society. Indeed, the basic attributes of dictatorial regimes in independent Africa can be traced to the colonial statist experience.

The strength of African authoritarianism has often been linked to the interplay between African elites and transnational capitalist structures. At the same time, the impact of autocracy was especially dispiriting for African associational life—for farmers' leagues, lineage associations, ritual agencies, urban workers organizations, associations of women traders, middle-class groups. Yet these compose the elements of a potentially vital civil society in Africa that will be essential for a successful democratic and egalitarian reshaping of African states. The obstacles, however, are as formidable as the crises. One scholar, Crawford Young, has written of autocratic African client-states (either of the West or the former Eastern bloc) that,

> in the most seriously deteriorated countries, the unravelling of the institutional fabric—public infrastructure, basic services, governmental apparatus—is so far advanced that alternative leadership which democratization might produce will have few resources or means to reconstruct a functioning state. Civil societies doubtless have far more modest expectations than the "terrestrial paradise" once promised [by single-party regimes]. But even these limited hopes may be disappointed, with uncertain consequences for the sustainability of democratization. In the worst cases (Zaire, Liberia, Somalia, Ethiopia), where utterly discredited autocrats clung to power through a final paroxysm of destructive violence, the devastation is so far-reaching that successors even with democratic commitments face chaotic circumstances bereft of resources.

The disabling of civil society also has its effects in "moderate" autocracies. Oppositionists find it difficult to mobilize significant numbers of people to protest government policies or actions, as Nicholas van de Walle, a leading observer of Cameroon, notes. "This not only makes toppling the government more problematic, it also has an impact on the nature of transitions, when and if they occur." What you see is not always what you get; democrati-

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zation can produce regimes ostensibly democratic but substantively plutocratic. "The weaker civil society is," says van de Walle, "the less accountable the groups who take over the state will be after the transition."

Whether the term "Afro-pessimism" is justified in the long run is yet to be seen. Its source, however, is quite visible: a deep and pulsating anger that is the product of three decades of authoritarianism after a century of imperialism. Will democratization be overwhelmed by "movements of rage"? Or will a broader politics take hold, one that finds the means to countervail both Africa's plutocrats and the demands of international economic institutions? Perhaps an alternative model is to be found in the strategy of the African National Congress (ANC).

The ANC has sought to discipline those within civil society who represented the "politics of anger" (for example, the black consciousness movement) and to link them to a broader political movement. The ANC's success led one observer, Steve Mufson, to remark in the *New Republic* that "civil society [in South Africa] has been both a base for overthrowing oppression and an embryo for a new nation." The ANC, under Nelson Mandela's skillful leadership, has insisted that its aim, in meshing the politics of anger with pragmatic politics, is to fashion a democratic state that will also constrain the plutocratic capacities of transnational capitalist structures. Democratic forces in the rest of Africa, as they struggle against authoritarian regimes, might do well to approximate the ANC's example, however precarious the current situation in South Africa.

In this issue of *Dissent*, we present an array of outstanding African intellectuals and writers contemplating the difficulties faced by their continent. With their essays and analyses are reflections and reports by some leading Western observers of Africa. We have not tried to cover all dimensions of Africa today, something that would in any event be impossible given its diversity, complexity and size. At best, we address only aspects of Africa.

We have restricted ourselves to sub-Saharan Africa (what the French call *Afrique noire*). Most of the articles are directly political or social, but we have also tried to give readers a glimpse of contemporary Africa's vibrant culture, with essays on literature and cinema. This includes a remarkable exploration of "African Literature as Celebration" by Chinua Achebe, perhaps the continent's most celebrated author. If, in its own small way, this issue broadens American understanding of Africa—of the struggles and terrible dilemmas faced by Africans, together with their hopes—it will have served its purpose well. □

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THE EDITORS □

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Abiola Irele

THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY IN AFRICA

A Time of Change and Despair

A bleak picture emerges from today's Africa. One glaring aspect is the material deprivation suffered by most Africans: the situation has degenerated to outright destitution because of steep economic decline across the continent in the past decade or so. Nearly every national economy has collapsed or is on the verge of doing so.

The gravity of the situation has to be measured not just in terms of painful statistics but against the economic optimism that pervaded the majority of African states in the early sixties. Substantial economic development and rising living standards were achieved in the aftermath of independence, and a few cases sustained their gains well into the late seventies and early eighties. We are therefore witnessing a complete reversal of the rising expectations that came with the triumph of nationalism.

The gloomy economic reality of Africa today is compounded by chronic political instability. Africa's political scene has long been characterized by civil wars, dreary successions of military coups and various civic disorders. The two aspects of the African condition—the economic and the political—are inevitably tied. The linkage has been underlined in recent years by graphic television pictures of starving refugees fleeing the ravages of civil war in Ethiopia, Chad, Liberia, and other theaters of ethnic and political violence. Africa has become so closely associated with instability that the popular image of our part of the world seems to be of ongoing politically induced disruptions of life with the attendant insecurity and constant misery. That this is a simplification often promoted and reinforced by selective reporting in the Western media does not diminish its basis in reality. There are enough signs of accumulated distress to warrant the growing pessimism that has taken hold of African minds over the past decade and now dominates discussion of the continent's affairs among qualified observers.

It is against this background—a despair that has assumed the dimension of existential angst—that recent developments require a special form of attention. There has been a rolling movement of challenges to existing power structures across the continent. Major transformations have been effected in a number of countries (for example, Ethiopia, Benin, and Zambia) and there has been vigorous contestation in many others (such as Zaire and Kenya). In the West, outside of a narrow circle of specialists, not much attention has been paid to these developments; in fact, they have been largely ignored by the media. Recent events in Africa continue to be interpreted as signs of a condition of chaos, thereby confirming colonialist ideology, according to which Africans are inherently incapable of governing themselves.

The most distinctive feature of recent African developments is that localized manifestations of dissidence have metamorphosed into a determined and general reassessment of long-standing post-independence political and social arrangements. From this point of view, events in Africa parallel those in other parts of

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the world, notably the transformations in Eastern Europe (which helped stimulate current agitation in Africa). As in Eastern Europe there has been both a quantitative scope and a qualitative dimension that distinguish the current African events from previous convulsions. Principles of political participation and civic association are central. At long last the inherent crisis of political legitimacy that was masked both during the colonial period and after has ripened.

The Legacy of Imperialism

To understand this crisis, we must consider how Western imperialism profoundly modified the way questions of political legitimacy were posed by and for Africans. In the nineteenth century massive historical transformations touched nearly every corner of Africa. Forces were at play that, though often initially independent of the European incursions, became directly implicated in the imposition of European rule. Contradictions within African societies were not transcended but given new complications by the impact of colonialism.

A few examples will illustrate this point. Othman dan Fodio's *jihad,* undertaken at the very dawn of the century, imposed Fulani hegemony over the northern parts of what came to be known as Nigeria and precipitated the fall of the Yoruba empire centered at Oyo to the south. These were important factors enabling British penetration of the Niger-Benue basin, leading to the eventual emergence, after the First World War, of present-day Nigeria. Similarly, French conquests in Western and Central Africa were facilitated by a process of dissolution already at work within the traditional state formations in these areas. In the Sahel (in Western Africa) in particular, disaffection of Samori Toure's vassal states and populations (the background to Ahmadou Kourouma's recent novel, *Monnè, outrages et défis*) paved the way for both his defeat in 1898 and the ensuing incorporation of these populations into the French empire.

The history of Southern Africa provides perhaps the most striking instance of convergence between internal African developments and external pressures. The meteoric rise of Shaka and the unsettling effects of the Zulu

La Mort historique de Lumumba, by Tshibumba Kanda-Matulu (Zairian), collection Bogumil Jewsiewicki. Photograph courtesy of the Center for African Art, New York City.

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empire he fashioned in the early nineteenth century provoked general upheaval throughout the region that has imprinted itself on the collective memory as the *mfecane,* or "the great dispersal." This disruption remains an essential backdrop to Cecil Rhodes's colonizing enterprise in Southern Africa and, in retrospect, may be seen as the first act in the historical drama enmeshing the indigenous populations of Southern Africa, the English, and the Boers—a drama still being played out in our own day.

These cases demonstrate that, even when allowance has been made for the superior arms of the Europeans, the aims of Western imperialism were often furthered by internal crises within African societies. To put the matter another way, the Europeans exploited dynamics within African societies to their own imperial advantage. Europeans appeared at a particular historical moment, when important readjustments were taking place in Africa, and they brought a new complexion to the process. They imposed their own order on an especially fluid internal situation. By the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans had refashioned the continent, giving it an entirely new configuration.

In an important sense, the Europeans simplified matters by integrating large populations of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds into their colonial possessions. But they failed to resolve the problem of political legitimacy, which had been fundamental to antecedent history in Africa. The order imposed by the colonial powers was conceived on European terms, served their interests, and came at considerable cost to Africans. Apart from humiliation and servitude, this order proceeded from haphazard patterns of conquest and annexation and left a legacy of untidy borders.

Because of the conflictual nature of the colonial situation (graphically underlined by racial and cultural differences between rulers and ruled), the question of legitimacy was largely irrelevant for the imperial powers. The French simply suppressed traditional, precolonial institutions, and the British fashioned a myth of indirect rule. But on the essentials there was no fundamental difference: there was no question as to where ultimate authority lay, who was ruler and who was subordinate. This authoritarianism was codified in the colonial legal arsenal with an array of laws that prohibited assembly, restricted movement, proscribed "sedition," and so on. (After independence, these laws survived in nearly every African state and proved to be convenient repressive tools in the hands of the successor governments.)

It is understandable that African attitudes to colonial regimes were governed by what might be called affective disengagement. The African was not a citizen but a subject. Exceptions were made for certain categories (for example, for those born in the so-called four communes of Senegal and within the crown colony of Lagos, in Nigeria) but these merely confirmed the degraded status of everyone else. In such a situation, any wholehearted identification with the structures of power—I leave aside opportunistic collaboration—would have been unnatural. In any case, there was little incentive for active identification, for the colonial regimes provided very limited scope for personal advancement, except in the indirect or frankly devious ways so well shown in Ahmadou Hampaté Ba's novel *The Fortunes of Wangrin.*

Economic, Cultural and Moral Dimensions

The economics of colonial dependency played a vital role in shaping the crisis of legitimacy. In the early period of imperial rule, widespread recourse to forced labor made blatant the brutality of colonialism's economic imperatives. African populations were forcibly thrust into the imperial cash nexus and the consequent social dislocations unraveled the fabric of communal life everywhere. African productive capacities were systematically reorganized on behalf of the economic interests of the colonial powers, and this produced distortions in African economies that remain to this day. The premise of the colonial "pact," as this reorganization was frequently portrayed, was the deliberate narrowing of horizons open to Africans; Africa, in colonialism's scheme, only existed as a source of raw materials and primary labor.

The implications were not only political and economic but cultural and moral as well.

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Africans were sucked into a new world system—an expanding capitalist order—and into an immense vortex of social and cultural change demanding painful adjustments, not just by individuals but of whole collectivities. Colonialism involved nothing less than a comprehensive reconstitution of African societies: of the traditional modes of production and governance and of social organization, cultural expression, and fundamental norms. The consequence of transitions from agrarian to industrial modes of production was severe dislocation due to the exploitation of the continent's resources for the direct benefit of Europeans. Colonialism was a transformative trauma, signaling a moment of profound historical discontinuity for Africans. In all spheres of life a new paradigm was imposed. It rested largely on Western models of industrial and technological civilization driven by the capitalist mode of production. The nation-state was its political and territorial expression. In short, the colonial experience in Africa, as in other parts of the non-Western world, amounted to a wrenching and harsh confrontation with triumphant (Western) modernity.

Needless to say, the colonial imposition did not yield in Africa the type of societies that industrial transformation created in capitalist Europe; Africans stood no real chance of benefiting collectively from the material advantages such transformations offered, even though they had been incorporated into the cogwheels of its world system—and even though the discomforts were as real for Africans, if not more so, as for the European masses. Importantly, an outstanding element of the Western model was missing when it was applied to Africa in the context of colonialism: the liberal values that had been shaped by the Enlightenment. African nationalism, especially its Pan-African variants, was initially an intellectual response to this contradiction. But its motive force derived ultimately from sociological factors: nationalism in colonial Africa, in its mass aspect, was a reaction not only against foreign rule but also to particular pressures of historical change. There was deep-seated resentment against exclusion from the benefits of modern civilization—benefits visible in the living standards of Europeans living in Africa itself. Thus it was, ironically, the colonial conflation of the material trappings of European modernity with "standing" in the world that fueled African nationalism.

Paradoxes

The consequence was a paradox for African nationalism, both in its intellectual expression and in its popular manifestations. On one hand, there was a need for self-affirmation, which drew on cultural (precolonial) antecedents to give substance to claims to autonomy; on the other, there was an acknowledgement that those antecedents would be superseded in a new order that drew from the West and therefore risked undermining those same claims to autonomy. From this point of view, nationalism was an overtly political expression of a fundamental dilemma arising out of an ambivalent relation to a modernity associated with the historic encounter with the West. For, despite frequent use of the rhetoric of archaism, it was always clear to African nationalists that the African past to which they appealed was, in the final analysis, irretrievably lost. To be meaningful, nationalism required a prospective rather than a retrospective vision.

This accounts for the utopianism that was integral to nationalism in colonial Africa. It assumed a salvational and even messianic significance, one that shined through popular forms of reaction to colonial rule such as the Kibangi movement in the Congo. The same impulse pervaded the more reflective forms of the nationalist project, as is evident in Kwame Nkrumah's injunction to his followers, expressed in terms adapted from the Christian Bible: "Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all else shall be added unto ye." The meaning of this injunction was clarified in the Action Group's electioneering slogan on the eve of Nigerian independence in 1959: "Freedom for all and life more abundant." Commitment to modernization conceived as the recovery of historical initiative by Africans was thus made unambiguous. African nationalism was predicated on new beginnings on the continent, in immediate and specific relation to the exigencies of modern life.

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In this way, the ideology of nationalism was firmly linked to the ideology of development. The various theories of African socialism propounded in the early years of independence, notably by Leopold Sédar Senghor, Julius Nyerere, and Kwame Nkrumah, sought to expand the utopian vision inherent in the nationalist project, to resolve the tension between its two poles of reference in the quest for a new society. They sought an accommodation between traditionalism, conceived as a counter discourse to imperialism, and the pragmatic requirements of the Western paradigm. Their emphasis on socialism as the preferred route to economic development proceeded logically out of disaffection with the historical nexus between capitalism and colonialism. But the appeal of socialism also lay in the instrumental value ascribed to it, the application of rationality to social life, which, it was thought, offered the means of accelerated development. Although Soviet achievement certainly impressed African ideologists at this time, what they proposed was an original form of socialism, uniquely African in its attention to the human rather than the instrumental import of its modalities. And the mobilizing force of the moral ideals associated with socialism counted as a strategic consideration.

While African socialism did not represent a general consensus, it was the most serious conceptual effort to cope with the urgent tasks facing Africa at independence, tasks that came to be subsumed under the term "nation-building." As the term suggests, the first priority was to consolidate the territorial basis inherited from colonial regimes. This meant welding disparate populations brought together in each new state by the vagaries of European conquest. This territorial imperative was a consequence of the original "modular" framework (to borrow Benedict Anderson's term) within which African nationalism had to operate in the colonial context. In the new states, primary affiliations conditioned by factors such as ethnicity and language had to be subordinated to the claims of the nation-state. The latter was envisaged essentially in legal terms. Although the theoretical separation between formal citizenship and original nationality (made familiar by the American model) did not enter into the thinking of African leaders at this point, something resembling it became established as the norm: political identity was deemed to stem from one's spatial situation within administrative and juridical boundaries rather than from rooted connections. Given the extreme diversity that characterized most African states, the problem was to infuse the political community defined in these spatial and legal terms with an "organic" quality.

The preoccupation—and even obsession—with territorial integrity and "national unity" arose from the fragility of the institutional framework of the newly independent states. Colonialism bequeathed not national entities but administrative structures, at best intimations of future national formations—from the point of view of history, modes of hypothesis rather than embodiments of fact. As such, the new structures were in direct competition for legitimacy with traditional precolonial systems. The formal and legal status of the latter were often ill-defined, even nonexistent. Still, traditional authorities exercised more than a vestigial pull on political and moral sensibilities. A strict application of the national principle to satisfy these sensibilities was impracticable, more so than in other parts of the world with similar problems. The justified fear of general chaos arising from any attempt to "unscramble" Africa—the crisis in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire) was an early, dire portent—induced an official rigidity concerning the inviolability of colonial boundaries. But this rigidity had to contend with national realities on the ground, realities so powerfully dramatized by the movement for Biafran secession and highlighted by Somali irredentism in the Ogaden.

But as these examples also demonstrate, ethnicity operated in a dynamic context of social interaction in which economic competition was exacerbated by the constraints of underdevelopment. National and ethnic loyalties were called into play more by economic and social factors than sheer atavistic impulses. It is in these circumstances that the Western model of the nation-state as the unit of political life assumed critical importance for African

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governments, which were also preoccupied by social development.

What needs to be stressed is that African leaders staked their claims to legitimacy on their ability to realize the promise of independence in concrete terms. In the early years of independence, efforts were undertaken to tie the immediate political objectives of national independence to the spread of the amenities of modern civilization. The political leaders and the emergent bourgeoisie of Africa assumed in real earnest the role of a modernizing elite. This was a brief but heroic period, when energies that had lain dormant were effectively released. In the process self-confidence returned to Africans. Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana played an exemplary role, for his grandiose ambitions for modernization corresponded to the inspirational needs of the moment. Without a doubt, this set the pace for what came to be seen everywhere in Africa as a political imperative.

As a result, the meager infrastructures bequeathed by colonialism to many African countries began to be expanded or overhauled: roads, ports, and railways were built or improved (the "Tanzam" line from Dar-es-Salaam to Lusaka, constructed with Chinese help in the face of Western opposition, took on a symbolic value in this regard). Industries were established, often with foreign investment, but sometimes with capital generated from internal sources. The endeavor to endow Africa with industrial capacity was complemented by an effort to institute a system of social services, with palpable and often dramatic results. For example, considerable expansion of education set in motion a process of social mobility, whose dynamics (admirably captured in the adventure of Amamu, Kofi Awoonor's fictional hero in *This Earth, My Brother*) produced a whole category of Africans with new aspirations and life orientations. These were Africans for whom, as Mariama Ba's novel *So Long a Letter* demonstrates, Western life-styles were taken for granted. In addition, the spread of modern medicine led to a sharp drop in infant mortality, drastically altering the demographic picture of Africa.

Although all these achievements were modest in comparison, say, to those of the Asian Pacific rim countries, they were real, and in some instances such as in Côte d'Ivoire, impressive. The country enjoyed an "economic miracle," with annual growth rates of over 10 percent throughout the sixties; its capital, Abidjan, became a model of urban development in Africa. Côte d'Ivoire thus became a measure of new possibilities, pointing to a real fulfillment of the hopes of formal independence.

Burdens and Ambiguities

Such successes vindicated the central proposition of nationalism—that Africans could really take charge of their destiny—but fostered great—revolutionary—expectations. This put tremendous burdens on states that had deliberately assumed the role of agents of development. Making matters more difficult were a variety of structural constraints, often ignored by Western critics and African radicals, which effectively blocked progress toward sustained growth—toward initiating Rostow's celebrated "take off."

We need not dwell here on the external constraints, besides noting that they ensured a post-independence perpetuation of the colonial pact and guaranteed the vested interests of African ruling classes in neocolonial arrangements. For our purposes, most salient are the internal impediments to the political legitimacy of African rulers and the links to development. Here we must focus on the one-party state, which has been rationalized as the political expression of the ideology of development, as the means of concentrating the political community's collective energy and will on the problems of nation-building. While this idea was argued with persuasive force, especially by Nyerere (whose views derived, it needs to be said, from admirable principles), it harbored obvious contradictions from the beginning. The party was summarily assimilated into the state as an embodiment of the people, thus substituting a part for the whole. Coercion became the inevitable practical corollary, as history has shown us in Africa and elsewhere. Yet there was a particular irony to the African develop-

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ment, for one government after another fell back upon the authoritarian methods of colonial rule to enforce an impossible unanimity on national objectives. The one-party state turned out to be the negation of the very principles—socioeconomic and political advance of the people—that it was supposed to enshrine. Consequently, it undermined the basis of the legitimacy craved by African rulers.

Furthermore, a one-party state could not be reconciled with the Pan-African ideal with which African nationalism had been closely associated in the colonial period. Obsession with national unity soon became a narrow territorialism that often served as a means by which dictators protected individual turfs. As state policy such unity limited broader scope, such as the continental vision of earlier ideological leaders. Colonial borders became effective barriers to the movement of people and the normal flow of trade and other transactions, with serious implications for the traditional economies from which the common people derived their livelihood. Also, there were grave ecological consequences, such as the rapid depletion of pastures through overgrazing in the case of the Masai. The breakup of the East African Community is instructive in this regard, as is the fact that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has maintained only marginal interest for the populations of the subregion, in spite of countless protocols signed by leaders over the past twenty years.

The length to which the tunnel vision of national interests can go is depressing. It is demonstrated, for instance, by official promotion of xenophobia in order to justify the expulsion of "aliens" (that is, other Africans) from Ghana and Nigeria. The terrible suffering that resulted provides sad confirmation that Africans have become locked into a nation-state model that is not only inappropriate to their situation but patently dysfunctional.

This, then, is the underside of modernization as pursued in the era of African independence. It is the story of an inspiring idea that lost its way through mismanagement, corruption, and the arrogance of power. It has cast a shadow on African prospects and created the current mood of disillusionment so well reflected in the dystopias that now dominate African literature, especially fiction. The moral ambiguities explored in such works as Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born,* Ahmadou Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence,* and Nurrudin Farah's *Maps* proceed directly from the problematic relation between the immediacies of consciousness and the public context of individual life. The themes of legitimacy, national identity, and the quest for a new order, which provide the background for the narrative development in works like these, also ground explorations of the defining dilemmas of contemporary Africa.

Current agitation for democratization and human rights is a response to these dilemmas, the sign of a profound movement of the collective consciousness. It addresses the question of legitimacy not merely in terms of the competence and morality of today's leaders but in terms of the adequacy of present arrangements to the lives and aspirations of the African people. That fundamental institutional questions are being posed is attested to by the means of struggle, in particular the calling of a "National Conference" by the reform movement in Benin, and similar patterns that ensued in other francophone African countries. If agitation across Africa has not assumed the proportions of the *levée en masse* of Frantz Fanon's populist imagination, it conforms to his call for a reprise of the nationalist project in the context of post-independence Africa.

The full significance of these developments must be grasped in the broad perspective of Africa's history—of long decades of misery in which this continent's people were tossed about by internal and external forces always beyond their control. In the colonial period, the discourse of freedom elaborated by Europeans as a function of their own internal development—the source of contemporary modernity—was deployed by Africans against the unprincipled (European) violation of Africa. In the present "season of our discontent" we see Africans deploying it inward, proposing freedom as a condition of political legitimacy and as the principle enabling the implementation in Africa of the original project of modernity—the maximization of life chances for all humanity.□

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Aristide R. Zolberg

THE SPECTER OF ANARCHY

African States Verging on Dissolution

Beset by a horrendous economic predicament, Africa is today also haunted by a dreadful political nightmare: now that the winds of democracy are sweeping the continent, it looks as if tyranny might give way to anarchy. The term is used here in its literal sense, to denote a nearly total absence of constituted authority that leaves a country's contentious elements to fend for themselves. Anarchy is no mere figment of the white racist imagination, but a realistic description of the conditions that have emerged among a disparate group of African countries. Should these be dismissed as highly exceptional cases, or do they reflect in a more extreme form problems common to sub-Saharan Africa generally?

Serious consideration of these matters has been blocked by the self-censorship of well-meaning observers, reluctant to furnish ammunition to those who proclaim that Africans are but one step removed from savagery. But the crisis has now become so severe that we must abandon such niceties and stare reality in the face. The purpose of this analysis is not to demonstrate that the tragic fate experienced by a handful of sub-Saharan countries is ineluctable; rather, it seeks to establish how, despite their bad prospects, Africans might avoid such outcomes, and what obligations this entails for the rest of us.

One thing should be clear from the start: although Africa's troubles are commonly laid at the door of "tribalism," this is a gross oversimplification. True, ethnic solidarities play a major role in its political life, but this does not always lead to violent conflicts. Most countries consist of a fairly large array of diverse groups, making for a very large number of possible confrontations; but severe clashes are in fact relatively rare. Yet ethnicity does play a role. The question we must therefore ask is: under what conditions do normal attachments of human beings to their communities become pathological?

The first instance of an African country falling apart, which evoked headlines in the springtime of African independence some thirty years ago, was the ex-Belgian Congo—today's Zaire. The Congo's problems were thought to be unique, attributable mainly to an especially exploitative colonial power that failed to prepare the country for self-rule and then responded to pressure by quickly getting out of the way. The consequences of this negative legacy were said to be compounded by an unusually divisive array of "tribes," exacerbated by cold war confrontations involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and China.

Following the death, possibly at the hands of the CIA, of Patrice Lumumba, leader of the sole Congo-wide and multi-ethnic political organization, the country quickly fragmented into localized movements, headed by ethnic leaders backed by rudimentary militia, sporting either a vociferous Marxism or an equally strident "Westernism." However, Humpty Dumpty was unexpectedly put together again when the United Nations intervened to reestablish the country's territorial integrity and the CIA, in one of its greatest feats, transformed an army clerk named Joseph-Désiré Mobutu into a Hobbesian sovereign. Thanks to this patronage, which brought him unstinting military assistance, and to the world's continuing interest in the country's mineral resources, the CIA's

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creature emerged as one of Africa's cruelest tyrants, and certainly the richest.

For two decades, stability prevailed. Then, with Zaire subject to the geopolitical devaluation occasioned by the end of the cold war, Mobutu was dropped by his American and European patrons as overly embarrassing and enjoined to sanitize his economy. With tyranny going out of fashion everywhere, he also faced internal demands for political reform. The accumulated wherewithal of repression enabled him to fend off these demands, at least for a time, but only at the cost of escalating violence. Then, once the tyrant was no longer able to properly reward his henchmen for their services, they went into business for themselves. Matters came to a head in September 1991, when the soldiers brought to the capital to repress demonstrations on behalf of a National Conference of Democratic Forces, belatedly convened by Mobutu to alleviate international criticism, devastated the city instead. Kinshasa was pacified by French and Belgian troops sent in to evacuate their citizens; but it was clearly the beginning of the end. Mobutu now agreed to an opposition leader as prime minister, but subsequently replaced him with a more amenable personage, who proceeded to suspend the National Conference; this provoked an intervention by "pro-democracy" elements of the army, in turn put down by Mobutu loyalists.

There is no doubt the tyrant will soon be gone; but given that for the past quarter of a century government in Zaïre has meant almost nothing but depredation, the country will be back at square one—with the added burdens of a much larger population, the plague of an HIV epidemic, a huge international debt, and a long list of accounts to be settled between ethnic groups and institutional factions that worked with Mobutu or suffered as his victims. A large stock of weapons will be used as currency.

In the past two years, chaos has also engulfed the region's two oldest independent states, Liberia and Ethiopia, as well as Somalia. While almost totally ignored in America, Liberia should be of special concern because of its relation to our own racial history, and its use as an instrument of U.S. policy for over a century. It has been proudly displayed as Africa's only independent republic, a little black America constructed by voluntarily expatriated ex-slaves. In reality, however, the ex-slaves were mostly duped and intimidated into going back, and Liberia evolved into a quasi-colonial client state, founded on racial inequality. Until well after World War II, it was governed under the umbrella of the U.S. Navy by a tiny minority of American-Liberian families, organized as a one-party machine, fueled by rake-offs from concessionary companies, among which Firestone Rubber was paramount, until the discovery of rich iron and bauxite deposits brought in a number of others. The hinterland's heterogeneous peoples, formally designated as "natives," were left under the rule of their traditional leaders, turned into clients of the American-Liberian machine. With less access to education than in any European colony, they were mobilized by the chiefs for plantation and mine labor, and as with many other "backward" peoples, also provided rank and file for the constabulary.

Liberia's ancien régime lasted until 1980. Its downfall began when President William Tolbert's decision to increase the price of rice, the major staple of the "natives," triggered massive protest; brought in to repress the populace, the army joined them instead. With the officer class restricted to American-Liberians, the coup was staged by a band of noncommissioned officers under the leadership of Master-Sergeant Samuel K. Doe. Ten days later, the foreign press was invited to witness the public execution of a dozen senior government officials.

Despite historic ties to the American-Liberians, the Reagan administration cynically accepted the fait accompli and Doe's perfunctory promise of democratization. Over the next five years, Liberia was turned into a bastion of the American security system, and thereby emerged as the leading African recipient of U.S. aid on a per capita basis. The sudden influx of military goods and the launching of major construction projects raised the level of corruption to unprecedented heights. Predictably, elections held in 1985 under American supervision produced a majority for Doe. He proceeded to scavenge the state on behalf of his

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own Krahn people, a small group located in the southeast alongside the Côte d'Ivoire border, who dominated the army's enlisted ranks. But this triggered growing resentment among the groups he excluded. After an attempted coup in 1986, the last American-Liberian in the government, Charles Taylor, was dismissed, and fled into exile.

As with Mobutu, Doe's value dropped precipitously with the waning of the cold war. Invoking his corruption and violations of human rights, the United States in 1987 placed Liberia into receivership. In late 1989 Charles Taylor led a guerrilla force of about 250 into Nimba county, Liberia's primary agricultural, mining, and logging region. He had backing from a combination of strange bedfellows: mischief-making Muammar Qaddafi and Burkina Faso's radical leader Blaise Compaoré, but also Côte d'Ivoire's conservative President Houphouet-Boigny, who worried about Doe's irredentism. Welcoming the invaders as liberators from Krahn rule, Nimba County's population swelled the ranks of Taylor's force. This in turn triggered retaliatory violence by Doe's army, propelling some two hundred thousand refugees into Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, and others south into Monrovia.

As Taylor pushed on toward the capital, all of Liberia's peoples were engulfed in the confrontation; the Mandingo aligned themselves with Doe, while the Gio and Mano split off from Taylor to form yet another movement, under Prince Johnson. With the various forces stalemated around Monrovia, where civilian deaths escalated, in August 1990 leaders of the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS) decided on an unprecedented intervention, on the grounds that the war was no longer an internal conflict because thousands of their citizens were trapped in Liberia, while neighboring countries were swamped by Liberian refugees. After the multinational force landed, Doe was assassinated under mysterious circumstances. In October the peacekeeping forces established an interim government under political science professor Amos Sawyer; but its authority was limited to the capital, while Taylor controlled most of the country.

Negotiations dragged on, chaos set in. As of early 1991, half of the population was uprooted, with over seven hundred thousand abroad; the death toll rose to some twenty thousand, mostly civilians; agriculture was totally disrupted, creating a danger of famine. Seasoned observers asserted the situation was much worse than anything they had seen in Lebanon, and Liberia's ubiquitous Lebanese traders were themselves fleeing back to Beirut. Although in mid-September the antagonists agreed to stop fighting and turn in their arms to ECOWAS, it is unlikely that this will prove to be a permanent settlement. Exiled Krahn forces are continuing to stage attacks from Sierra Leone, and Taylor is receiving new military assistance from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

Where the prospect for Liberia is for a protracted, multisided civil war, Ethiopia faces a disintegration into a number of successor states. Its roots in the legendary Abyssinian Empire notwithstanding, the Ethiopia we know is a relatively recent and fragile amalgam. Throughout its history, Africa's Coptic Christian realm stagnated at an extremely low level of organizational development, owing to material and technological constraints; its two main kingdoms, Tigre in the north and Amhara-speaking Shoa in the south, contended for supremacy but were themselves subject to recurrent disintegration. In the late nineteenth century, following the scramble set off by the collapse of Egypt, the Shoan king Menelik astutely exploited European rivalries over the Horn, whose geopolitical value was enhanced by the Suez Canal, to more than double his holdings. The new lands provided coffee, gold, and slaves; but the expanded realm was more difficult to manage because Menelik's new subjects were culturally very different, Negro animists, or Oromo and Somali Muslims—the Christian empire's traditional enemies.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, despite intermittent attempts at modernization from above, including those launched by the Italian occupiers from 1935 to 1941, Ethiopia's administration remained rudimentary, and there was little economic development. After expelling the Italians, Britain assumed control over their colonies, Eritrea and Somalia, awaiting their disposition by the

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international community. Eritrea is a relatively well-developed territory, whose population, according to the British census of 1950—the last to date—consists about equally of Copts, closely related to Ethiopia's Tigreans, and Arabic-speaking Muslims. Although Britain at first advocated partition, as in India or Palestine, in 1950 bargaining among the great powers prompted the United Nations to entrust the country to Ethiopia, on condition that it be allowed to retain its own representative institutions and its distinct cultural identity. But once international attention waned, Emperor Haile Selassie violated all these conditions and moved steadily toward annexation.

Especially hard on Muslims, Ethiopian rule provoked the formation of an Eritrean liberation movement initially based in Cairo. Annexation triggered dissent among Christians as well, and in 1961 the movement launched an armed struggle. Soon the conflict was highly internationalized. Ethiopia was firmly backed by the United States, which assumed Britain's succession in the Red Sea region, as well as by Israel, concerned to prevent the emergence of a Muslim-dominated independent state. As for the Eritreans, they gained access to money, weapons, training, and staging bases from a variety of Arab states; their supporters included Sudan, but also Syria from 1964 onward, and, after 1969, Libya and Southern Yemen.

As in any empire, the Ethiopian armed forces constituted a double-edged sword. Their first challenge to Haile Selassie's authority, in 1960, was defeated with U.S. help. In the following decade, the country underwent substantial economic growth, mostly by way of generous concessions to foreign investors, and education was expanded as well; but this brought few benefits to the urban masses, and none whatever to the peasantry, whose margin of survival was steadily reduced by demographic expansion and galloping erosion.

During the drought that swept the continent in the early 1970s, Ethiopians were deprived of aid because the emperor insistently denied there was any famine. This abdication of responsibility destroyed the regime's last vestige of legitimacy among the educated of the new generation. The stresses of the unending Eritrean war undermined discipline among the armed forces; in early 1974, yet another string of mutinies culminated in a generalized uprising. With the military out of commission, protestors with long-accumulated grievances could act with impunity. The cities were taken over by workers and students, the landed estates of the nobility and the church by peasants. Waiting for the government to disintegrate of its own accord, the armed forces finally deposed Haile Selassie and proclaimed a Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). The coup then evolved into a social revolution, punctuated by a radically egalitarian land reform in March 1975.

The PMAC clashed simultaneously with defenders of the ancien régime and more revolutionary organizations, as well as subjected peripheral groups taking advantage of the empire's collapse to increase their autonomy; and it was torn also by tensions between Amharas and other groups. By 1976 the PMAC had managed to transform itself into a tightly structured body dominated by Amharas, under the leadership of Major Mengistu Haile Mariam. Although this radical junta controlled the capital and the major towns, it faced uprisings in nine out of fourteen provinces in addition to Eritrea. Those in the south were supported by neighboring Somalia, then a client state of the Soviet Union. With the Carter administration unwilling to intervene actively on its behalf, the PMAC turned to the Soviets, who quickly decided that Ethiopia was more valuable. The Somalis invaded Ethiopia on July 23, 1977, and rapidly seized the coveted Ogaden territory, but were expelled the following March by Ethiopian forces under the leadership of Soviet officers, with the support of Cuban troops. The Eritrean insurgents had taken advantage of the diversion of the Ethiopian army to the Ogaden in order to gain control of most of their province; however, after the victory in the south, the Ethiopians were able to roll them back, again with direct Soviet assistance. The conflict then turned into a devastating war of attrition, causing recurrent waves of refugees.

With his survival and Ethiopia's integrity assured thanks to the Soviet commitment, Mengistu undertook to transform the ancient empire into a People's Republic; but the ruthless strategies he deployed over the next

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decade exacted a heavy cost in human suffering, and probably aggravated the population's economic predicament. These developments again fostered massive flight as well as renewed uprisings.

Almost totally dependent on the Soviet Union and East Germany, the regime was doomed from the moment the Gorbachev government decided to sharply reduce its involvement in the Third World. The Mengistu regime ended where it began, in Eritrea. The turning point came in February 1990, when after nearly three decades of struggle, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front took Massawa, Ethiopia's major port, and the delivery point for relief food as well as military supplies, and laid siege to the regional capital. The government's war effort was fatally hampered by the Soviet Union's refusal to provide aircraft to transport troops to the besieged city. Concurrently, the Tigrean People's Liberation Front advanced southward toward Addis Ababa. With the treasury empty and a critical shortage of fuel, in early 1991 the army disintegrated and Mengistu prepared to leave.

Seizing the opportunity provided by the Soviet withdrawal, the Bush administration then undertook to create an orderly succession, as well as to negotiate the evacuation of some 14,000 Ethiopian Jews who had fled to the encircled capital. Mengistu flew off on May 24, and three days later representatives of the opposition forces as well as remnants of his government gathered in London to negotiate the transfer of power. Hitherto opposed to Eritrean independence, Washington now accepted the battlefield outcome and acquiesced to a referendum, to be held within two years; at American insistence, the opposition coalition agreed to hold a conference by July 1 to form a broad-based provisional government. Meanwhile, with American blessing, the Tigreans entered the capital to restore order.

Although the conference did produce some democratic guarantees and a timetable for political reconstruction, Ethiopia continues to implode. The Council of Representatives has decided to give each of the country's fourteen regions its own parliament and control over internal security. While designed to foster a viable confederation, this framework may signal the beginning of the end.

In effect launching their existence as an independent state without awaiting the referendum, the Eritreans have turned their back on Ethiopian affairs, while nevertheless retaining control over its lifelines. With the external struggle over, divisions between Muslims and Christians are ominously moving to the fore. Although in control of the capital, the Tigreans are isolated amid hostile Amhara territory, with their home base hundreds of miles to the north; moreover, they constitute a mere 10 percent of the Ethiopian population. The Amharas, who make up some 25 percent, remain firmly committed to Ethiopian integrity but are themselves deeply divided by the conflicts of the past decade and a half; convinced that the Tigreans have no choice but to share power with fellow Christians, they are seeking to exact the maximum price for their cooperation. The collapse of central authority has redounded once again to the benefit of the periphery, now in the hands of well-armed guerrilla forces. With Eritrea gone, the main challenge comes from the Oromos, some 40 percent of the Ethiopian population, a majority being Muslim. They view themselves as an enslaved people, who can now legitimately exact bloody retribution from their defeated Amhara masters.

At the beginning of 1992, the most extreme situation anywhere in Africa was to be found next door in Somalia. In the past year the country has split in two, and is now so torn by violence as to be inaccessible to even the most dauntless international humanitarian organizations. A Muslim pastoral people, in the pre-European period the Somalis were organized into loosely associated clans sharing many cultural elements but without an overarching political organization; in the twentieth century they ended up under four colonial jurisdictions: Ethiopia, French Djibouti, British Somaliland, and Italian Somalia. In the postwar period nationalists in the British and Italian possessions advocated reunion of all Somalis; although this was partly achieved in 1960, when the two territories merged into a single state, independent Somalia continued to voice irredentist claims, especially toward Ethiopia's

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Ogaden province. The pursuit of this objective was initially constrained by the need to maintain a balance among the clans and by Ethiopia's military superiority. Exploiting the resulting frustrations and the civilian regime's notorious corruption, in 1969 the army took over. Major General Siad Barre, a member of the Marahan clan, whose domain encompasses the Ogaden, then astutely exploited superpower rivalries to obtain Soviet aid for a vast military buildup.

In 1977 Barre successfully invaded the Ogaden, but was ultimately routed. In addition to losing most of its military equipment, Somalia was faced with a heavy burden of refugees from the Ogaden, supplemented in the mid-1980s by new waves driven by hunger. The defeat precipitated an attempted coup by disgruntled army officers from rival clans; but Siad Barre, now receiving military assistance from the United States, survived through severe repression and relying increasingly on his own kin. This in turn fostered a proliferation of opposition groups, including a secessionist movement in the north (former British Somaliland). In 1982 the various groups united as the National Somali Movement and began staging raids from Ethiopian bases.

In the late 1980s the northern insurgents gained control over most of their region; Barre's clannishness precipitated a rebellion in the central part of the country as well; and in the south disgruntled army commanders began to go into business for themselves. Severely injured in an automobile accident and abandoned by the United States, the seventy-year old despot turned toward Libya, but to little avail. The accelerating collapse of authority left a vacuum filled by young warriors with automatic guns. Thousands fled the ravaged countryside to the capital city, only to land amid bloody chaos. Barre escaped in January 1991, leaving seven well-armed groups jockeying for power. Now in effect an independent country, Northern Somalia is itself being torn asunder by clan-based bands of juvenile bush fighters. Negotiations among the warlords have so far led nowhere, largely because they hardly control their men; outside powers are no longer interested, UN agencies fear for the safety of their personnel, and the Organization of African Unity is reluctant to take on a desperate case in a problematic region. The situation at the end of 1991 was summed up by a headline in *The New York Times* (Dec. 12): "Somalia Self-Destructs, and the World Looks On."

One suggestive indicator of Africa's predicament is that as of the end of 1990 it had over five million refugees, nearly one-third of the world's total. The violence that produced international flows also occasioned massive internal displacements, with current estimates reaching over nine million. Leaving aside the special situation of southern Africa, which accounts for about one-third of the internal and external refugees, these displaced populations are all victims of violent conflicts in sovereign African states. Since the dawn of independence bloody implosions have taken place also in Uganda, which appears to have somewhat recovered, and Chad, which is perennially on the brink of yet another catastrophic episode. Major civil conflicts have erupted as well in Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan.

What distinguishes these unfortunate countries from the rest of the continent? Altogether, they constitute a highly disparate group, with very different pre-European cultures, dissimilar colonial experiences, and varying economic situations at the time the conflicts got under way. Nor do these countries share a particular pattern of ethnic groups, beyond heterogeneity; but this is a feature they share with many others. Pre-1980 Liberia, however, did have a configuration that is especially explosive, involving political and economic domination by an ethnic or racial minority. Fortunately, this is quite rare; aside from white-settler countries, which indeed experienced violent decolonization, it was found also in Rwanda and Burundi (Tutsi-Hutu), as well as Zanzibar (Arabs-Africans), all of which have by now in fact blown up.

Besides ethnic heterogeneity, what the countries under consideration have in common is that they can all be described as *weak predatory states*. But since this is again a characteristic they share with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, it does not by itself provide an adequate explanation of their predicament. The solution to the quandary is

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that *all* such states hover on the brink of disaster; whether or not they go over the edge depends on circumstances, especially the emergence of a sinister syndrome found in all the cases considered: a coincidence of tyranny with external military patronage.

The extreme weakness of the African state was initially hidden from view because it displayed a considerable capacity for engaging in repressive action; but this entails a confusion between two types of power, which Michael Mann has termed "despotic" and "infrastructural." Although the African state looms large in relation to other organizations, it has a limited capacity for managing society and directing change—a paradox captured by Thomas Callaghy's apt characterization of that state as a "lame Leviathan." A further source of confusion is the assumption that the persistence of an organization can be attributed to its capacity to perform tasks required for survival. Since most African states have kept going, it is taken for granted that they meet "system-maintenance requirements." However, states do not exist in a vacuum, and their fate depends substantially on the character of the international environment. The weakest of states may persist if that environment is supportive, as Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg have suggested with regard to the international political community's stance toward the new African states. But they neglected to point out that the international environment can also make things worse, either by way of destructive intervention, as in southern Africa, or indirectly, by making it possible for tyrants to expand their power well beyond what they might do on their own.

The African states' generally weak infrastructural power stems from the combination of distinctive precolonial and colonial structures. In contrast with states in other parts of the developing world, which were often carved out of larger empires, most of them consist of small-scale societies that were bundled into entities designed by European colonial entrepreneurs in response to imperial rivalries of the late nineteenth century. These societies had a low ratio of population in relation to land and lived close to the level of subsistence; under conditions of slash-and-burn agriculture, their domain was not fixed. Chiefship tended to be over people rather than over land, and political dynamics focused on competition among clientelist factions. The absence of political centralization and the low population density left open the possibility of "exit," giving rise to a process of segmentation whereby new social clusters were constantly being established by emigrants on available land.

Consequently, precolonial political structures could offer relatively little resistance to the formation of a new system of domination, and the remnants of traditional societies appeared in the newly formed colonial territories mostly as "ethnic groups," which were sometimes newly constructed amalgams altogether. Governing their possessions with traditional imperial techniques, the Europeans exploited tensions among these groups to enhance their own power; existing differences were sharpened also by the uneven impact of social and economic change. Ethnic groups became "advanced" or "backward," rich or poor.

African movements for self-determination are usually referred to as "nationalist"; but the term is somewhat misleading in that it evokes *national* identities. Whereas it is true that established colonial territories were generally taken for granted as the relevant political unit, and that a number of organizations sought to encompass its entire population, democratization also sparked ethnic solidarities. Party competition as well as the high value of office fostered a proliferation of political entrepreneurs, who cast their appeal in parochial terms.

The postcolonial elite's project has been aptly characterized by Frederick Cooper as "self-aggrandizement combined with enough redistribution to maintain its tenuous and vital hold on the state" ("Africa and the World Economy," *African Studies Bulletin,* 24: 2–3 [June/Sep. 1981]). However, Africa's predatory rulers are severely constrained by extreme poverty, and the prevalent structural weakness makes it as difficult to increase extraction by way of state action as of capitalist exploitation. Takeover of the apparatus of the colonial state provided resources for organizing the initial array of clientelist networks by which the state was managed, and there was also aid from the former colonial power, and grants and loans

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from international actors seeking to establish a sphere of influence within the African arena. In a few instances the new elites had access to mineral royalties; but more commonly, they could squeeze income only by fostering a shift from subsistence to export agriculture, while stepping up exactions from primary producers.

Some of the loot was redistributed to relieve pressures from the urban sector, to which rulers were most vulnerable, but much of it was appropriated. In the face of demands occasioned by broader mobilization and rising expectations, resources had to be expanded and demands managed. Beleaguered governments relied heavily on the instruments of despotic power, namely the police and military forces inherited from the colonial state. But the strategy proved self-defeating, for the agents of repression quickly learned where true power lay; hence within a few years a majority of the new states experienced military coups.

Although foreign policy "realists" in the United States welcomed military rule as a harbinger of political stability, of anticommunism, and of development policies attuned to capitalist imperatives, this rested on a profound misunderstanding of African realities. During the colonial period, soldiers were frequently recruited from minority groups in hinterland regions, "unspoiled" by dawning political consciousness; hence they tended to be even more parochial than the civilians they replaced and, with no experience of statecraft, quicker to fall back on brute force. Far from inaugurating an era of stability, the advent of the military often exacerbated the very conflicts that had provided the pretext for intervention.

Africa's difficulties were aggravated in the 1970s by the deterioration of its already extremely marginal position within the international economy, the energy crisis, the mounting burden of debt, the corruption of economic managers as well as of their foreign patrons, and the disenchantment of investors. A number of countries also experienced a crisis of subsistence, occasioned not only by catastrophic climate, but also the degradation of marginal agricultural environments as the result of overgrazing and overcultivation, as well as the expanding production of commodities for export at the cost of subsistence farming. Amplifying the effects of these factors was Africa's runaway demography. Overall, food production per capita decreased by nearly 20 percent from 1960 to 1986, with the prospect of continued decline.

It was during this very period that Africa moved to the fore as an international strategic arena. This reflected the evolving relations between the superpowers in the epoch of "Mutually Assured Destruction," with cautious stability at the center and confrontational probings throughout the periphery. The United States early on planted itself in Zaïre, Ethiopia, and Liberia, while leaving French-speaking territories to be managed by Paris, and the southern part of the continent by Portugal and South Africa; the Soviet Union established itself in ex-French Guinea as well as Somalia, and invested in futures by sponsoring insurgent movements in the Horn, Portuguese Africa, and Namibia. Even after the countries of Portuguese Africa gained their independence, these probings and confrontations were accompanied by vast flows of weapons. Wherever these deadly supplies landed, conflicts between rulers and ruled, and between contending groups, increased. Even as the superpowers worked out ways of averting the dangers of thermonuclear proliferation, they poured out streams of firepower, mostly automatic and semi-automatic personal weapons, that fostered a rapid escalation of misery and dread among the world's least fortunate.

Weak predatory states with a large supply of firepower, which they tend to misuse but cannot monopolize, are subject to two distinct kinds of deterioration. In the face of shrinking resources and an absence of institutional restraints, desperate authoritarian rulers degenerate into kleptocratic tyrants, which under African conditions takes the form of ethnic exclusiveness, as seen in Liberia and Somalia. This occurred also in Uganda, Chad, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and Burundi. Without resources to fight back, oppressed urban and rural masses have little choice but to try to get out from under. If the international configuration allows, this may result in a massive exodus. Another path is internal withdrawal, where peasants concentrate on production for subsistence while

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withholding from the state what it claims as its due. But because extortion is their only way of making a living, rulers in turn have to engage in violent repression of such challenges.

Ethnocracy can also trigger a violent implosion, a disaggregation of both rulers and ruled into primary solidarity groups vying with one another in a desperate search for security. Even if its existence is externally assured, the state may be reduced to little more than an arena where groups vie for survival. Under these conditions, life is reduced to two fundamental activities: food production and war. But since weapons are widely available and warriors can secure their subsistence without engaging in production, warmaking gains the upper hand. As violence becomes the leading means of survival, it tends to feed on itself. The process fosters the emergence of a warlord system, as in seventeenth-century Germany or China at the beginning of the twentieth, verging on a murderous Hobbesian war of all against all. Should the preservation of existing borders no longer be of concern to the international community, tenuously amalgamated countries may be allowed to disintegrate altogether into their component elements.

The present diagnosis suggests that the greatest threat to the lives of contemporary Africans arises not from what is loosely called "tribalism," the deep attachment of ordinary people to their communities, but rather from the emergence of ethnically based predatory states. How can this be met? To begin with, the cases considered highlight the key role and heavy responsibility of foreign sponsors in sustaining the ethnocrats. In this light, despite the catastrophic present, Africa's prospects have improved somewhat since the United States and the former Soviet Union relinquished their callous adventurism. But withdrawal is not enough; the wounds that murderous conflicts have inflicted on fragile societies are unlikely to mend of themselves, and Africa remains fair game for other international birds of prey—especially in the northeast, which is linked with the Middle East theater.

All these problems call for an enduring commitment from the international community to assist in the political reconstruction of destroyed countries, to provide protection against nefarious intruders in vulnerable regions, and even to intervene directly should the state take on a completely pathological character. Although this appears to violate conventionally held notions of "sovereignty," in such cases sovereignty has in effect ceased to exist.

The appropriate approach is multilateral, preferably under the umbrella of some regional organization, as in Liberia. Africans should help one another, but cannot shoulder this additional burden entirely with their own resources. Beyond this, it is especially urgent to bring about general disarmament, and to establish a tight embargo on the further supply of automatic weapons, which constitute an even deadlier plague in Mogadishu, Monrovia, or Moroto than in the Bronx or Dallas.

While international restraints would limit the tyrants' destructive capacity, they would not prevent their emergence in the first place, which is attributable to deep-seated, historically determined flaws in the political configuration of contemporary Africa. Although I have emphasized the infrastructural weakness of the state as a major problem, this is not to argue on behalf of the reinforcement of state power alone, since Africa's predicament arises also from the fact that societal institutions are insufficiently developed to hold potential tyrants in check. As increasingly emphasized by a new generation of African intellectuals, priority must be given to the development of "civil society"; but this should not be viewed as an alternative to state formation.

Infrastructural power, as against despotism, is fostered by organic exchanges between state and society, and this in turn can take place only if the economic environment is relatively favorable. But this is clearly not the case among the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, which are extremely poor to start with, and have deteriorated further as the result of a fatal combination of inauspicious world realities and political misdeeds. The resulting debt burden is enough to swamp Africa's fledgling democratic forces. Hence this is not the time to impose on them harsh remedies, but rather to wipe the slate clean. □

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Mahmood Mamdani

AFRICA: DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES

Clash Between Ideas and Realities?

A marked change in the political landscape of Africa has been in the making over the past five years. Ever since demonstrators in Khartoum and Omduran drove Sudan's Jaafar Numeiri out of power in 1985, pressure from the streets has extracted political concessions from regime after regime. The new effectiveness of domestic reformers is, to an important extent, a result of international developments. The collapse of the Soviet empire has tempered geopolitical considerations in shaping Western policies toward Africa. It has also made it far more difficult for Western governments to explain away—either to people at home or to Africans—pressure for internal reform as a Trojan horse for "Soviet subversion." As President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda notes, the end of superpower rivalry has "orphaned" many governments in Africa.

Although it is tempting to read the influence of East European "pro-democracy" movements into the growth of African reform movements, the force of immediate example has come not so much from Eastern Europe as from the West Bank and Soweto. Algerian demonstrators evoked the "Intifada" when they called for greater political participation in 1988. That same year, the "Sopi" ("Change") youth rebellion in the streets of Dakar, Senegal, consciously evoked "Soweto." While in some instances old-fashioned force was employed to pursue change—for example, the armed struggle waged by Eritrean and Tigrai movements that forced Mengistu out of power in Ethiopia in 1991—new forms have, by and large, developed across the continent. These suggest a shift from rural to urban protest, from peasant society ("the people") to civil society ("the citizens"). Behind urban demonstrations, from Khartoum/Omdurman (Sudan) in 1985 to Lusaka (Zambia), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and Nairobi (Kenya) in 1990, there has been the organized strength of professional associations (lawyers, academics, even doctors in some instances), trade unions (miners, railway workers, taxi operators, workers in manufacturing establishments) and churches.

A truly novel form of oppositional activity is the demand for a "National Conference." This demand originated in French-speaking Africa, but has spread far beyond (to Kenya and Nigeria, for example). The conference is inevitably chaired by a church dignitary with high moral standing and allows participants to vent a host of grievances, focusing on two issues in particular: official corruption and arbitrary government. The conference deliberates and often announces the appointment of a new government, with an executive prime minister at its head. Junior officers frequently join the National Conference. The result is to render the existing presidency ceremonial and to paralyze the army command. In some instances, reformers have won the day: in Mali, one of Africa's oldest dictatorships was overthrown by a combination of civil and military forces; in Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, one of Africa's longest surviving presidents, was replaced through a multiparty electoral contest. More often, outcomes are mixed. In Congo

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(Brazaville), a National Conference was temporarily successful: sections of the army tried to remove the new government, only to be challenged by street demonstrations. In Rwanda, the regime tried to forestall the demand for a National Conference, but reformers have kept up pressure through a regular one-day-a-week strike combined with oppositionists milling in the streets of Kigali. Paralysis is more evident in Zaire, where a National Conference convened with the participation of "Sacred Union" (a coalition of over 130 political parties) and "Civil Society" (a coalition of numerous local "associations"), but has been unable to overcome one of Africa's most brutal dictatorships.

Theories and Realities

As democratic struggles bring forth reforms, an unexpected consequence is likely to be tension between demands and solutions. There is a curious tendency in contemporary Africa to view democracy as a set of established institutions that only need to be put in place. But received theories of democracy often clash with contemporary African realities. These theories derive from two sources: the post–World War II colonial reform that was Africa's last attempt at a continent-wide democratic transition and the global influence of liberal ideas, especially following the collapse of Soviet-style communism. From the former spring notions of pluralism, from the latter those of rights.

Tension between theoretical assumptions and existing realities can either lead to sterile attempts to enforce textbook solutions or to rich, creative reflection. With an eye toward the latter, I shall try to explore this tension by focusing on two issues that are of particular salience in the present transition.

The first is the narrow understanding of pluralism that is the legacy of postwar colonial reforms that led most African countries to independence in the sixties. Pluralism was then conceived only in political terms. *Political* movements were recognized while the autonomy of *social* movements was undermined. A wedge was thereby driven between political and social movements, and this cultivated a postindependence environment that allowed the emergence of state parties—at first several, and then one. But if, as I am suggesting, a highly restricted notion of pluralism prepared the soil for single-party dictatorships in the past, simplistically equating democracy with multipartyism—a common assumption of contemporary oppositional movements in Africa—is likely to lead to a similar outcome. Only a concept of pluralism that incorporates a social, ideological, and political dimension can check this.

The second issue that highlights the clash between received (democratic) theory and living (African) reality is the question of who should be the bearers of rights. In other words, even if there is agreement on the definition of rights, to whom should they legitimately belong? The question is vital because it goes to the heart of defining democratic participation in contemporary African conditions. I shall argue that certain notions received from Euro-American liberalism—that the bearer of the "right to self-determination" is the nation, and that the bearer of "human rights" is the citizen—are so restrictive that they will disenfranchise increasing numbers of groups and individuals under present conditions in Africa. A democratic struggle that champions the rights of these groups and individuals will have to question these assumptions.

The Question of Pluralism

In post–World War II Africa, widespread democratic aspirations fueled powerful nationalist movements. In response, colonial powers ceded reforms that, for the first time, introduced multiparty politics in most African countries. It was the eve of independence; many heralded the first democratic transition in Africa.

It was aborted. Hardly a decade later, few countries could boast multiparty politics. Was there something in the very nature of the colonial reform that paved the way for dictatorship? Or did this occur despite the reform? Was the reform, for all its claims, decisive in demobilizing democratic forces? Or were these forces too weak and disoriented to consolidate democracy? For anyone interested

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in shaping the next round of reform, the answers to these questions are vital.

The tenacity of the postwar democratic movement was nourished by the relationship between political and social protest. As a political movement, nationalism gathered strength when it was anchored in popularly based social movements. This was as true of Julius Nyerere's Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in eastern Africa as it was of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's party of the Gold Coast (CPP) in the West. Both drew militants as well as supporters from social sectors already set in motion by trade unions and peasant cooperatives, women's and youth societies, and dissident anticolonial religious groups.

Although this may seem obvious today, it was often obscured in the continent-wide celebration that marked the postindependence environment. In those years, intellectuals tended to write the political history of nationalism at the expense of its social history; and as nationalism itself was refashioned into state ideology, political history often became no more than the biography of the nationalist leader. The reduction of social history to political history and of political history to political biography was facilitated by the fact that the colonial reform undid the ties between political and social movements. In British colonies, for example, social movements—that is, trade unions, peasant cooperatives, "friendly societies" (for women, youth, or religious groups), burial societies, or mutual help associations—were required by the reform to register with colonial governments in order to obtain legal recognition. The Registrar of Societies had the power both to "register" and "deregister." Registration involved acceptance of state supervision over an organization's rules, finances, and activities. In short, accountability to membership became secondary to the organization's accountability to the authorities. Similar controls were extended over the media. This was the context in which freedom to organize political parties was introduced; they were invited to prepare for electoral contests and eventually for a transition to independence. Political and social movements were separated, and political movements that once articulated a broad social vision were gradually reshaped by their leaders into vote-gathering machines.

Consequently, the ultimate impact of the reform was to emancipate and to stifle; it introduced political pluralism but it undermined social and ideological pluralism. Political parties flowered, but social movements and the popular press wilted. In this contradictory context, nationalist parties with a transformative social agenda were recast, usually from within, into no more than crafts unions of professional politicians whose objective was to enhance their political careers. The final result: the one-party regimes that emerged after independence. In the colonial period, the autonomy of social movements and the press was compromised by state supervision; now autonomy was liquidated. The ruling party fashioned a single trade union, a single cooperative, and various "mass organizations" (usually of women and youth) under its own tutelage. Whereas state-controlled broadcast media coexisted with state-supervised print media in the colonial period, both came under state control under the new regime. Whereas the colonial reform promoted a narrowly political pluralism, the one-party, postcolonial regime liquidated all pluralism. When the dictatorships outlawed all expressions of autonomy in public life, whether in organization or expression, they built on supervisory powers embedded in colonial legislation.

Take the example of Tanzania. Drafted in the heyday of the postwar reform, the "Societies Ordinance of 1954" gave the colonial governor "absolute discretion" to declare a social organization unlawful if "used for any purpose prejudicial to, or incompatible with the maintenance of peace, order and good government." The governor used these powers in 1957 to declare several local branches of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) "unlawful societies," without explanation. Ironically, after becoming president of independent Tanzania, TANU's leader, Julius Nyerere, used these same powers to ban an autonomous and remarkably successful peasant organization (the Ruvuma Development Association).

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There was a similar pattern in legislation pertaining to freedom of expression. Laws initiated in the colonial period but expanded after independence empowered the registrar to refuse registration to a publication in the interest of "peace, order and good government." The responsible minister could cancel registration for the same reasons, and the president could prohibit a publication in "the public interest."

In this context, the reforms of the fifties permitting multiparty systems, and the single-party regimes that came later, do not signify opposed alternatives: on the one hand pluralism, on the other, the lack of it. Rather, there is a continuum: the soil that nurtured the single-party regime was prepared by the limitations of the earlier reform. Both systems rested on the negation of the social and ideological dimensions of pluralism, and consequently limited it to its political aspects.

Today, this type of thinking is upheld by the simplistic equating of a multiparty system with democracy. Even demands for pluralism going beyond the narrowly political, for example, demands by opposition parties for access to state-controlled broadcasting media, confirm that, as a rule, democratic pluralism is interpreted by opposition movements between the Sahara and the Limpopo to mean no more than party pluralism.

Rights

Most discussion of rights in Africa tends to center around such questions as: Should rights be "negative" only (that is, defining what government cannot do) or also "positive"? Should they be "individual" only or also "collective"? How significant is the "right to development," formulated by the Senegalese jurist Keba M'bay, formally recognized by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 1977 and endorsed by a General Assembly Declaration in 1986? Although such discussions place African intellectuals and activists in the mainstream of international human rights debates, they obscure the specificity of the African situation and the potent question of who should be the legitimate bearers of rights in the African context. Consider, for example, the notion of the "nation" as the bearer of the "right to self-determination" and the "citizen" as the bearer of "human rights."

The "right of nations to self-determination" has a strongly European flavor—as "human rights" has an American flavor. It was in Europe, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, that theorists chipped away at the notion of divine right; in its place, they erected an edifice of national sovereignty. "The source of all sovereignty," declared French revolutionaries in 1789, "is essentially the nation." But liberals and conservatives then argued over who or what was a nation. Generally speaking, democratic, liberal conceptions tended to rest on concepts of "social contract," depicting the nation as freely associating individuals. Conservatives tended toward organic theories, viewing nations as products of tradition—that is, not created but inherited. Yet, both liberals and conservatives agreed that the right to self-determination belongs to the nation. By mid-nineteenth-century, a confluence of nationalist and statist notions fashioned a consensus in Europe: the legitimate political authority in human affairs is the state, and it is the right of each nation to have one. The debate on rights now became one of nationhood. Whether Jews or Armenians or Poles were nations or not was a question about whether they had a legitimate claim to the right of self-determination, that is, the right to establish their own states.

A different turn occurred in the United States. The dividing line in American constitutional thought is the Civil War. Before it, discussion of rights tended to be cast in European terms; afterward, rights theory was shaped strongly by local conditions. It is well known that for the first two years of the Civil War, Lincoln was prepared effectively to guarantee the seceding states a constitutional right to slavery if that would keep the union intact. The core issue in the Civil War was not slavery but the claim by the southern states of a right to self-determination. The defeat of the South was also a defeat of the principle of the "right of nations to self-determination" in the United States. It was Lincoln's genius to recognize that what was distinctive about the American experience was the dispersal of

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nations and not their coming together.* For America, unlike Europe, was a settler country. From the settler point of view, the right to national self-determination presented problems: irrelevant to a settler population of multinational origin, it raised the uncomfortable question of the right of the indigenous population to self-determination. Hence, the significance of the shift from the "right to self-determination" of nations to the "right to non-discrimination" against individuals in American constitutional thought. This both preserved the union and undercut any demand for self-determination by the indigenous inhabitants of the United States.

Europeans and Americans who vigorously debated the nature and rights of "nations," "nationalities," and "national minorities" within Europe and America were all agreed that there were no nations among colonized peoples; and this was said to be particularly true of the "Dark Continent." In Africa there were "tribes," not nations. Unlike nations, tribes were presumed to have no social history. Their existence in time was quantitative, not qualitative. A compilation of occurrences over that time could generate a chronology of dates and events, but not a true history; whereas the movement of such a chronology was at best cyclical and repetitive, the stuff of historical movement was progress. And, of course, "peoples without history" have no legitimate claim to rights.

More: those who lack a social history can only possess innate and primordial characteristics. It would surely be futile to attempt a historical sociology of these peoples as one might of nations; more appropriate to study tribes with the tools of an ahistorical anthropology. Stripped of its social basis, the history of struggles of colonized peoples to control their own destinies—in other words, the history of their democratic struggles—was easily interpreted as some kind of a pathological "tribal" response. Take, for example, two historical events of great emotive significance: the French Revolution and the Mau Mau rebellion. An episodic description of both would bring to light similar occurrences: destruction of property, widespread disorder, death, and so on. Put in the context of a broader social history, this chronology would gain a larger meaning; bathed in a deeper hue, it could reveal milestones in the unfolding of world-historical developments, such as in the general conception of the French Revolution. Yet stripped of sociohistorical context, similar events appear devoid of reason, are bizarre and mindless, expressions of the irrational—as numerous studies present the Mau Mau. In one case violence and disorder may appear as the "midwife of history"; in the other they testify to the darker and primordial side of tribal society. "Tribalism," in much of the literature of anthropology and political science, comes to denote the real nature of the "native," stripped of the veneer of civilization.

But if Africa has no nations, only tribes, who is to be the bearer of the right of self-determination there? The U.N. Charter proclaimed the right of "self-determination of peoples" at the end of the Second World War; who are these "peoples" in Africa?

One must grasp what is unique about the African context to arrive at a notion of rights adequate to it; one cannot simply "apply" and "respect" pre-existing Western notions. Africa is not the Americas. There is no country within Africa with a settler majority. The South African settler minority would prefer "an American solution" that would shift focus from the collective right of self-determination to the individual right of non-discrimination. Instead of linking power and rights, this would displace the question of power by that of rights.

And, of course, Africa is not Europe. In Africa more than in any part of the world, there has been little coincidence between the history of nation formation and that of state formation, between social history and political history. Many state boundaries in Africa date from the 1960s, from the decade of independence. More than the outcome of internal social histories, they reflect the exigencies of external geopolitics.

Most African states are not nation-states. What passes as nationalism is by and large statist ideology; some observers have even

* I am indebted to discussions with Robert Meister of the University of California at Santa Cruz for this observation.

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asserted that in Africa, states set out to create nations. Yet it would be false to claim that "the right to self-determination" is irrelevant in Africa because nations do not exist there. After all, what makes eight million Swedes a "nation" with a legitimate right to self-determination and millions more Hausas a "tribe" with no such right? Why are four million Norwegians a "nation" and eight million Baganda a "tribe"?

But is the alternative to turn things upside down? To make of every African "tribe" a "nation," each with the right to self-determination? Or should we recognize that the terms "nation" and "tribe" are overloaded and emotive precisely because one has been considered the legitimate bearer of the right to "self-determination" but not the other? How many have forgotten that, when the struggle for Eritrean independence was raging, its legitimacy in African intellectual circles hinged on one question: is Eritrea a "nation" or not? If the answer was "yes," then the demand for a separate Eritrean state was a legitimate struggle for "self-determination"; if not, it was illegitimate "secession."

Of this there is little doubt: faced with state repression, often unleashed in the name of national unification, democratic struggles inevitably give rise to demands for group rights. The nineteenth-century European response was to recognize the "right of nations to self-determination." Every nation was deemed to have the right to its own state. Can Africa afford to duplicate this and grant each national group ("nationality," "tribe") the right to its own state? Has the attempt to solve the question of "national minorities" in Europe—Poles, Armenians, and Jews in an earlier period, and Serbs and Croats today—through statehood, allowing the "national minority" to become a "national majority," worked? Or has it served simply to proliferate "national minorities" in Europe? In fact, the solution to "tribalism" in Africa cannot be to declare demands for self-determination "illegitimate" and repress them; nor can it be to declare "tribes" to be "nations," each entitled to separate statehood. We must, on the contrary, question what underlies both solutions: the assumption that "self-determination" must mean, in the final analysis, independent states.

Human Rights, Citizen Rights

One would have thought that the development of theories of human rights would have effectively countered statist definitions of the "right to self-determination." After all, throughout seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century France, liberal thinkers tried to articulate a system of fundamental individual rights against the state. Hence the core of liberalism was defined in terms of individual rights and limited government. Ironically, in its attempt to find a ground for "rights" that could not be violated by the state, liberal thought became circumscribed within a state-defined logic. For liberalism, the bearer of individual rights came to be "the citizen," a member of the political community defined by the state. The revolutionaries of 1789 proclaimed *"the Rights of Man and the Citizen."* Contemporaries argued over whether citizen's rights should be confined to males or be extended to women. Critics also pointed out that the rights embedded in the Civil Code of 1790 were restricted not just to men but to "men of property." Later, militants from within the anticolonial movement would demand that the colonized be treated as "citizens," not "subjects"; in response to Article 53 of the European Convention of 1950, which excluded the non-Metropolitan countries from its provisions, Léopold Senghor cautioned fellow deputies in the French Parliament lest they prepare a Declaration of the Rights of "European Man"—which is exactly what they proceeded to do. But whether they were liberals or Jacobins, male supremacists or feminists, colonizers or colonized, and while they argued over how far the definition of citizenship may be restricted or stretched, they all agreed that rights were the prerogative of the "citizen."

This assumption was embraced by African nationalists on the morrow of independence. The restrictions of rights to citizens is a presumption of both the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted by the 1981 Summit of the Organization of African Unity, and its radical predecessor, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples of 1976, otherwise known as the Algiers Declaration. But is the equation of human rights with

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citizen rights appropriate to the social reality of Africa? Africa is a continent of extensive migrant labor. The political economy of a number of countries in its southern half (South Africa, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland) was shaped by migrant workers. In West Africa, colonial powers moved masses of populations from the semi-arid inland (the Sahel) to coastal plantations. Today over two million Bourkinabe migrant laborers live and work in Côte d'Ivoire. On the eastern side of the continent, the outmigration of impoverished peasants from Rwanda and Burundi has constituted a parallel development; as early as the 1950s, nearly 40 percent of the population of Buganda comprised Banyarwanda immigrants.

For migrant workers there is a radical rupture between the land of one's birth and that of one's labor, between the country of one's citizenship and that of one's residence. Since "human rights" in liberal theory flow from membership of a political community ("citizenship") and not of a laboring community ("residence"), millions of migrant laborers are effectively and legally stripped of their "human rights." Only when extreme injustices are meted out does this reality come to public light, as illustrated by the expulsion of Ghanians from Nigeria, or Rwandese from Uganda.

In fact, this problem has surfaced in democratic struggles in Africa. During the guerrilla war in the Luwero Triangle—residence for a large number of Banyarwanda migrants in Uganda—the National Resistance Army (NRA) linked the exercise of rights in village-based Resistance Committees to residence rather than citizenship. In the recent multiparty election in Côte d'Ivoire, the opposition refused to recognize rights of Bourkinabe migrant labor, but the regime championed the right of migrants to vote, incorporating their demands into its own project.

The statism of liberal theory creates a sharp disjuncture between the rights of citizen labor and the lack of rights of noncitizen labor. It is ironic that South African efforts to strip citizen labor of rights (through apartheid) was universally considered illegitimate, while its denial of the rights of noncitizen migrant labor (for example, immigrants from Mozambique) seldom came up for public discussion. This also shaped South African attempts to solve the question of apartheid by creating Bantustan citizenship, that is, by denying citizenship and rights to all migrant labor within South Africa.

My point is simple. Where the social and political history of peoples largely coincided, as in nineteenth-century Europe, citizenship served to enfranchise labor. But when the two histories are divergent, especially as political economies transcend state boundaries, the basing of rights on citizenship in the state community disenfranchises growing numbers of people. In Africa's context, the notion of rights as an attribute of citizenship has increasingly antidemocratic consequences. Consequently, rights must be rescued from the confines of state citizenship and linked to a more universal fact of labor (such as residence).

This is where an aspect of the American experience has relevance for African realities. The American legacy is dual. On the negative side, there is an extremely individualist notion of rights, which is a byproduct of the shift from the collective right of self-determination to the individual right to non-discrimination. On the positive side, there is a partial repudiation of narrow statist assumptions in liberal rights theory. In granting citizenship to blacks and Indians, the Thirteenth Amendment shifted the locus of citizenship from individual states to the federal government. This introduced a new element: the claim to rights was given a residential basis. The consequence was an uneasy balance of two contradictory foundations for rights, one in citizenship (federal), the other in residence (state).

Liberal theory is formulated around two constructs: citizenship and the market. One is an artifact of political life, the other of economics. Ironically, the claims of liberalism as a theory of the market may be weightier than those of liberalism as a theory of rights. Its statist character is underlined by the related claim that the right to self-determination ultimately is not possible without the establishment of a state and that the bearer of "human rights" must be a member of the political (state) community. I have tried to argue that both these claims need to be reexamined for meaningful democratic reform in the context of contemporary Africa. □

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Ama Ata Aidoo

THE AFRICAN WOMAN TODAY

"In most countries of Africa whole sectors of the economy, such as internal trade, agriculture, agro-business and health care are in the hands of women."

West Africa (September 9–15, 1991)

It might not be fair to blame as well-intentioned an event as Bob Geldof's Band Aid,[1] which was staged to raise awareness of the plight of drought victims in Ethiopia, and even raise funds for them. But there is no doubt that since then the image of the African woman in the mind of the world has been set. She is breeding too many children she cannot take care of, and for whom she should not expect other people to pick up the tab. She is hungry, and so are her children. In fact, it has become a cliché of Western photojournalism that the African woman is old beyond her years; she is half-naked; her drooped and withered breasts are well exposed; there are flies buzzing around the faces of her children; and she has a permanent begging bowl in her hand.

This is a sorry pass the daughters of the continent have come to—especially when we remember that they are descended from some of the bravest, most independent and innovative women this world has ever known. We speak of the Lady Tiy of Nubia (ca. 1415–1340 B.C.E.), the wife of Amenhotep III and the mother of Akhenaton and Tutankhamen, who is credited with, among other achievements, leading the women of her court to discover make-up and other beauty-enhancing processes. Her daughter-in-law was the incomparable Nefertiti, a black beauty whose complexion was nowhere near the alabaster she is now willfully painted with. Again from the pharonic era, we evoke Cleopatra, about whom "more nonsense has been written . . . than about any African queen . . . mainly because of many writers' desire to paint her white. She was not a white woman. She was not a Greek . . ." says John Henrik Clarke with the impatience of painstaking scholarship.[2] According to C.W. King, of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra, the last was "the most captivating, the most learned, and the most witty." Among the many languages she spoke fluently were "Greek, Egyptian, Latin, Ethiopian, and Syrian." Yet Shakespeare, heralding Western racism, could only dismiss Cleopatra as a "strumpet."[3]

Collisions

Modern Africa came into collision with Europe with the journey of Vasco da Gama from Portugal southward to find Asia. He passed what became known to the West as the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1492, and the Cape of Good Hope in 1496. Since then Africa has never known peace. First there was the slave trade. Then the end of the slave trade was celebrated with the conquest and colonization of Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. From then on, various Western groups considered Africa their happiest hunting ground. The energies of the people, the wealth on and in the land, everything that could be taken was taken by European powers, with complete abandon. The people resisted—to the best of their abilities. But it could not have been an even match, since one side fought with spears or bows and arrows, while the other used guns.

Less known is that in response to Europe's insistence on conquering the continent, Africa over five centuries produced countless women

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soldiers and military strategists, many of whom died in the struggles. A famous example was Nzingha (1582–1663), who tried to prevent the Portuguese from overrunning Angola. She died without achieving her objective, but only after showing them what she was made of. For their part, the Portuguese demonstrated that they had not come to Africa on a mission of chivalry. They fought Nzingha with uncompromising viciousness. When she suffered serious setbacks in 1645–1646, they captured her younger sister Fungi, beheaded her, and threw her body into the river.

In fact, in precolonial times, fighting women were part of most African armies, a well-known example being the all-female battalions of Dahomey (ancient Benin, early nineteenth century), who sought to protect their empire against invaders and internal treachery.

The Nzingha/Portuguese pattern was to be repeated in several areas of the continent over the next centuries. Queen after queen rose against the invaders. In the last years of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Yaa Asantewaa, an Asante (Ashanti, Ghana) queen led an insurrection against the British. Although her armies were defeated, "it is safe to say that she helped to create part of the theoretical basis for the political emergence of modern Africa."

True, all these women were reigning monarchs who found it relatively easy to organize armies against foreign occupation. But history is also replete with accounts of insurgencies organized by women from nonmonarchical traditions. One example is the women of Aba in Eastern Nigeria, who in the 1920s so successfully harassed the British that the colonial administration had to move its headquarters from Calabar to Lagos. Around the same time in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Mbuya Nehanda (Nyakasikana) was accused of fomenting an insurgency against the British. In the end, the conquerors decided that the only way to get rid of this frail woman was to hang her. And they did.

Struggles for Independence

After the Second World War, many women stayed in the forefront of the agitation for independence. Some, like General Muthoni (of the Mau Mau Rebellion) became guerrilla leaders whom the enemy feared even more than their male counterparts. Others, like Mrs. Ramsome-Kuti of Western Nigeria, were mainly nationalists of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois backgrounds. But then, so were the majority of the men who were their companions in such struggles.

Today, we know that the story of South Africa's fight against the institutionalized horrors of conquest would be different if women had not been prepared to get actively involved. And they paid the price. They were killed, maimed, incarcerated, and exiled. For instance, Sibongile Mkhabela was a student leader at the time of the Soweto riots. The only woman charged in the June 7th (1978) trials, she was jailed for three years and then banned after serving the sentence. Countless others like Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, and Zodwa Sobukwe survived the hounding of their men, only later to show an awesome readiness to assume leadership with all the sacrifices such decisions entailed.

Given such a heroic tradition, it is no wonder that some of us regard the docile mendicant African woman of today as a media creation. But if she does exist, she is a result of the traumas of the last five hundred years' encounter with the West, the last one hundred years of colonial repression, the current neocolonial disillusionment, and of a natural environment that is now behaving like an implacable enemy.

In 1992, the African woman must cope with a "structural adjustment program" imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank that is removing subsidies from her children's education, from health care, from food. Transportation to and from vital areas of her life have either broken down or never existed.

In 1992, there is a drought and the world is phenomenally hot. And the African woman has already given up on the season's crops. She is now wondering whether there will be enough water to last her and her children through this year for drinking, for cooking nonexistent food, and to keep the body minimally clean.

In 1992, the African woman is baffled by news of a "plague that has come to end all

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human hopes."[4] And she is afraid that she and her children might not survive this disease whose origins no one seems to know, and for which there is yet no cure.

Africa is the second largest continent, covering an area of over thirty million square kilometers. In spite of centuries of exploitation by its conquerors, it is still, potentially, the richest piece of earth in the world, with 60 percent of all known exploitable natural resources. And in spite of the vicious campaign about an African population explosion, Africa is not the most populous place on this earth. China is. In fact, given its size, and its current population of around five hundred million, the continent is *underpopulated.*

Burdens and Riddles

Three major factors have influenced the position of the African woman today. These were indigenous African societal patterns; the conquest of the continent by Europe; and the apparent lack of vision, or courage, in the leadership of the post-colonial period. "Leadership" in this context does not refer to the political leadership exclusively. We speak of the entire spectrum of the intellectual, professional, and commercial elites in positions to make vital decisions on behalf of the entire community.

From ancient times, the majority of societies around the world were either matrilineal or patrilineal. It is now clear that most African societies were matrilineages lasting millennia, from the prepharonic period all the way down to a micronation like the Akans of Ghana. What changed the pattern in some areas were, first, Islam and, later, Christianity, since both religions were obviously patriarchal in orientation. The African societies that retained vestiges of their matrilineages were also the ones that met both Islam and Christianity with the greatest resistance. These areas—for instance, coastal West Africa—are also where one finds some of the least oppressed women.

Today, it is not at all easy to imagine the *coastal* West African woman bearing with any equanimity even the thought of the heavy black veil, the burden of purdah, circumcision, infibulation, and so forth. But even for the West African Moslem woman, the veil is no more than a couple of meters of an often pretty gossamer fabric. This she normally and winsomely drapes over the back of her head and her shoulders. Indeed, the effect of this type of veil is to make its wearers look more attractive and decidedly unhidden. In this, West African women seemed to have more in common with Islamic women in faraway places like the Indian peninsula and the rest of Asia than with their "sisters" to their immediate north.

What seems to separate the woman "south of the Sahara" from the Arab-Islamic woman of the north is not so much the latter's "closeness to Europe" and "civilization," as the former's relative freedom to create herself, economic and political dynamics permitting.

But then, according to Nawal El Saadawi, "There are many misconceptions [in the West] about the identity, character and diversity of Arab women." This Egyptian writer asserts that although the North African-Islamic-Arab woman *is* veiled and circumcised, to know nothing more than that about her "borders on racism." Maybe African women share more commonalities than we are aware of.

In any case, some tenets presumed to be "Islamic" may not sound so strange to women in Southern Africa who have had nothing to do with Islam. For instance, in precolonial Zimbabwe as well as in colonial Rhodesia, the woman was regarded as a permanent minor, first her father's ward, then her husband's. If she outlived her husband, then as a widow she became the ward of some male in either her husband's home or her own home. Sometimes a woman became a ward of her own son(s)! This meant that she could never own property or be granted a bank loan. The situation was so bad that a conscientious and sensitive ZANU (PF) government (in Zimbabwe) attempted a corrective measure by passing the Legal Age of Majority Act in 1982. This law stipulated that at age eighteen a young woman became an adult, with all the attendant rights and privileges.

To a certain extent, African women are some sort of riddle. This is because, whether formally educated or not, "traditional" or "modern," they do not fit the accepted notion of them as mute beasts of burden. And they are

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definitely not as free and equal as African men (especially some formally educated ones) would have us believe. In fact, they fall somewhere between those two concepts.

To some West African men, the way West African women struggle to be independent "is really quite bad." They think that "these women are all over the place." Wherever men meet, you can be sure to hear jokes and stories about women, all of which are supposed to show how "terrible" we are. One solid piece of "advice" any growing boy is likely to pick up along the coast of West Africa is: "Fear women." And if there really is a Fon (Gabon) proverb that translates as "Woman is the root of all evil, only our souls can save us [from her]," then women have been in trouble for a long time in Africa!

The colonial period did not help women either. It is true that some of the "civilizing" missions did not want their policies to run counter to any patterns in the "natives" that were tolerant of women's development. So they gave a few girls some opportunities for formal education. Some of the girls' secondary schools in the area go as far back as 1837. But the missions came with their own ideas on how females should be educated to be "proper women." While the boys in colonial elite schools were being prepared to go to England to become professionals (mostly lawyers), girls in the equivalent schools were being taught needlework and needlepoint, crochet, and baking. This was to make sure that they became wonderful wives and great mothers. And many turned out exactly as programmed. Even they were only a few women from either traditionally royal or nouveaux riches families. For the great majority of West African women, colonialism meant unmitigated suffering.

A few women managed to squeeze some advantages out of the neocolonial era, and excelled in areas where women would not normally be expected to. The emphasis is on "few," because educational policies in Africa have never been democratic. Today, the pyramid is a symbol of what is happening to young women in the education systems of West Africa: a massive base and a needle-thin top. At the primary levels, girls and boys get equal opportunities to enter the system, or almost. But by the time a given age group gets to the universities, the ratio of girls to boys is as low as one to ten or worse. Apart from impossibly poor environments, this is a result of a number of negative forces in young women's lives, such as becoming pregnant and getting expelled from school, while the offending male—whose identity no one cares to know—is left free,[5] or receiving discouraging career counsel from sexist teachers and school authorities as well as schoolmates and well-meaning but reactionary relatives.[6]

High-Powered Tokens

Given the chance, a number of young women show their independence and courage in choosing careers, and in most cases do brilliantly, but women in high-powered positions are still hostages to tokenism. Certainly as "tokens" many of them have attained the top of their professions. Some even got there as early as other women from some of the most technologically advanced regions of the world. So that for a long time some countries in Africa have produced women doctors, lawyers, judges, university lecturers, and professors. There have been women in "rarified" professional areas such as imaginative writing, publishing, geology, architecture, engineering, transportation ownership and management, and music conducting. When we talk of African women today, we speak of over two hundred million people, some of whom are commercial and air-force pilots, engineers (electrical and mechanic), primary and secondary school teachers, telephone operators, and nurses. These professional African women are the exception rather than the rule—but that is how it is throughout much of the world today.

However, there is one group of women almost peculiar to West Africa. These women are in trade and commerce. Mostly, such women are referred to as "market women" or "market mammies" by non-West Africans. But of course, not all of them actually work from the markets, although the great majority do. Their activities range from gem dealing and high finance to "petty" trading. Therefore, their workplaces also range from highly sophis-

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ticated modern office complexes to the pavements of the cities where their kiosks stand.

For these women, the market is both a business arena and a home away from home. From early morning when they occupy their stalls they conduct their commercial business *and* their business as homemakers, including the day's cooking for husband and children. Indeed, many people who grew up in urban places (for example, in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Benin) could confirm that much of the time they went after school straight to the market to be with their mothers. The market was where they ate lunch and supper, did their homework, and had their baths from buckets and bowls. Such people recall, often with a great deal of nostalgia, that during the weekday, home was the market: a house was only for sleeping in. Meanwhile, these women make money to feed, clothe, and educate their children, and sometimes support their men.

For most West African women, work is a responsibility and an obligation. This idea is drummed into us from infancy. We could never have fought for the "right to work"—a major concern of early Western feminists. In West Africa, virtually no family tolerates a woman who doesn't work. So that today, there may not be too many homes in the region, including traditionally Islamic areas, where girls are encouraged to think they needn't have ambitions because one day they'll grow up to marry and be looked after by men.

Yet, Africa's women farmers may get the rawest deal of all.[7] Although it may now be fashionable to admit that women have been the backbone of the continent's agriculture, that is a very recent trend. Earlier on, their existence was not even acknowledged. Governments never mentioned women in agricultural policies. So the burden of constant poverty, of working on the farm from sunup to sundown and then coming home to take on dozens of other roles, was added to the deprivation of being invisible to policy-makers.

Debating Feminism

Currently, the debate about African women and feminism is hot. It is common to hear feminism dismissed as a foreign ideology, imported into Africa "with . . . crusading zeal" (A.N. Mensah, 1990) to ruin good African women. It is also easy, and a trap we all fall into every now and then, to feign a lack of interest in this discourse, or to airily maintain that "we don't need feminism" because we had strong women for antecedents. Many of us have declared at one time or another that "African women were feminists long before feminism." Certainly from the male camp, the cacophony is that African women do not need "feminism." Even though in many modern African states grown-up women are expected to crawl on their knees to offer food and other services to their husbands, their in-laws, and others in authority generally, most men still maintain that in their country, "women are not oppressed. There are roles which women and men have to play"—including crawling, obviously. The latest and most interesting front in the discourse was opened by Alice Walker, when she proposed that we substitute the term "womanist" to describe the global African woman's particular concerns.

When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist—especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of our land, its wealth, our lives, and the burden of our own development. Because it is not possible to advocate independence for our continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element in our feminism.

On the whole, African traditional societies seemed to have been at odds with themselves as to exactly what to do with women. For although some of them appeared to doubt gender and biology as bases for judging women, in the end, they all used gender and biology to judge women's capabilities. Otherwise, how was it that men ruled by proxy for women from those nationalities, like the Akan of Ghana, among whom inheritance and succession, and therefore power, were vested in the matrilineage and not the patrilineage?[8]

Some of us are convinced of something else: that much of the putting down of women that educated African men indulge in and claim is

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School children at play, Nairobi. Sean Sprague/IMPACT VISUALS

"African culture" is a warmed-up leftover from colonization. European colonizing men (especially Victorians) brought with them a burden of confusion: first about their own women, and then about other women. All of which was further muddled up by the colonizers' fantasies about the sexual prowess of both African men and women.

In the meantime, no one wants to hear African women discuss their problems. In Harare, a journalist recently wrote an incredible outburst that began with "Women, women, women, will they ever stop moaning?" He then went on to ask "whether [our] women will ever stop weeping to find solutions to their problems so they won't weep again?" He ended by declaring grandly that "it serves no purpose trying to convince each other that women are oppressed. *There are better issues to focus on.*"[9] (Emphasis mine.) A full comment on this piece could make a sizable book.

A way to appreciate some of the contradictions in the position of African women today is to adopt a bifocal mode of looking at them. One view would be from inside their own environments. This would reveal that in relation to their men, they were just as badly off as women everywhere. But viewed from outside, internationally, the picture changes somewhat. "For years, some of us have been struggling to get the world to look at the African woman properly. Hoping that with some honesty it would be seen that in actual fact, vis-à-vis the rest of the world, the position of the African woman has not only *not* been that bad, but in some of the societies . . . she had been far better off than others."[10] And this should include the self-congratulatory West.

This much is evident about the majority of African women today, from the Cape of Good Hope to Cairo. They live in the rural areas of the continent and its urban shanties. They have had only the most minimal education or none at all. They are married, monogamously or polygamously. They have had between two and six children. They are involved in peasant farming and petty trading. Their lives are ruled locally by men who speak in languages they do not understand and from abroad by alien men who speak languages they could not possibly understand.

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All this should be enough to make the African woman want to fold her arms, keel over, and just die. But she is doing anything but that. She is still pushing. The African woman today is a real heiress of her past. We need to intensify our struggle. For instance, instead of letting ourselves be "lulled into a false sense of security through tokenism and processes of 'de-feminization' which in most cases is a prerequisite for performing certain functions," we need to be able to challenge "gender and class oppression, imperialism and exploitation" and seek "access to policy-making positions, legal reforms, equal rights in education, employment and credit facilities."[11]

In the meantime, if, like men around the world, African men harbor any phobias about women moving into leadership positions, then they had better get rid of them quickly. After all, men have monopolized leadership positions in Africa over the last five hundred years, and still overwhelmingly do. If they alone could save us, they would have done so by now. But instead, every decade brings us grimmer realities. It is high time African women moved onto center stage, with or without anyone's encouragement. Because in our hands lies, perhaps, the last possible hope for ourselves, and for everyone else on the continent. □

Notes

[1] Also sometimes referred to as Live Aid, it was organized by Geldof in 1985. It galvanized the world. Among the honors Geldof received was an honorary knighthood bestowed by the Queen of England, and the 1986–87 Third World Prize. The Western media fell over itself paying him well-deserved homage, calling him "Santa Bob," "Sir Bob," and "St. Bob."

[2] See, among others, Cheikh Anta Diop, *Cultural Unity of Negro Africa* (1980); Ivan Van Sertima, ed., *Black Women in Antiquity* (1981), and any of the volumes in *The Journal of African Civilizations* series by the latter.

[3] In Act One of *Antony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare was unbelievably crude about Cleopatra. But then the Bard's racism is a great source of acute embarrassment. See *The Tempest, The Merchant of Venice,* and *Titus Andronicus.*

[4] Line from my poem: *These Days: II.*

[5] The story is so heartbreaking that no aspect of it bears telling. *The Herald* (Harare, Feb. 20, 1992) reports the most terrifying example of this to have come to the continent's notice in recent times. In an incident between boys and girls in a co-educational secondary school in Kenya that left *"19 female students" dead,* and during which, according to doctors, "71 girls were raped," *"only two schoolboys were charged with the offense!!!"* (Emphasis added.) Some of us keep talking about the problem, albeit to deaf ears. For example, "Profile: Remembering Tomorrow—A Conversation with Ama Ata Aidoo," by Sarah Modebe, *Africa World Review* (October 1990–March 1992), London; *African Woman* (Autumn 1991), London.

[6] One stock advice to a young schoolgirl who plans on having higher education is that she should be careful. Otherwise she would never find a husband. The harm done is never less because such "advice" is often well-meant or based on the common knowledge that "men are scared of smart women."

[7] According to Anthony Yudeowei of West Africa Rice Development Association, "over 80 percent of the small holder rice farmers of West Africa are women."

[8] Of course, this shows why it is dangerous to assume that because a society is matrilineal, it is also a *matriarchy.* Certainly, the Akans are one very good example of a people with a matrilineal base and an obvious patriarchal superstructure. (Freudian symbols unintended.)

[9] Cephas Chitsaka in the *Sunday Mail,* November 24, 1991.

[10] Quotation from my letter to Mineke Schipper to explain why I felt unhappy at the title and subtitle of her book, *Source of All Evil—African Proverbs and Sayings On Women.*

[11] Page 176, *West Africa* (3–9 February, 1992). Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi was reacting to a letter from K. Asare in a previous issue of the weekly. From my rather brief experience as cabinet minister (Education in Ghana, January 1982–June 1983), I fully endorse the view that in order to function as tokens women defeminize. Or we fall into the trap of being overly feminine. But then either way, we are rendered ineffective. Because on one hand we alienate the public (?) and on the other, our male colleagues refuse to take us seriously.

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Lucy Komisar

THE CLAWS OF DICTATORSHIP IN ZAIRE

The "Leopard" Still Rules

KINSHASA, ZAIRE

The collective taxi had just passed the square, white Social Security Administration building. One of the two young men next to me asked his friend, "Do you know how much the director there earns? Five hundred thousand zaires (about $7,500 a month) and what an ordinary worker earns? About 12,000 zaires ($16). It is such an injustice." The other agreed: "There are not two markets for rich and poor. His wife goes to shop at the same market."

I interrupted: "Aren't you afraid to say such things, to criticize the government in front of strangers like me or the driver or the woman in the front seat?" People had been imprisoned in Zaire for less. They looked at me. "The people here have suffered to the point that we are no longer afraid," one said. "People say what they think. Even the newspapers now say what they think."

"When did things change?" I asked.

"It began with the end of communism," one said. "The Americans supported Mobutu because they wanted to prevent the spread of communism in central Africa. Now that is over. And here, since the killing of the students in Lubumbasha, everyone is different." He grinned: "The leopard used to be powerful, but now the leopard's claws are falling out, and he can no longer leap as he did. Mobutu has lost his power."

Think back to the 1960s. The big international flash-points were Cuba, Vietnam, and the Congo. When Nikita Khrushchev banged his shoe at the United Nations, he was protesting the American-sponsored U.N. policy on the Congo, which had just become independent from Belgium. Washington had grown hostile to the leadership of the new prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, and used its influence to support Lumumba's opponents. Lumumba had just been captured and assassinated by his enemies. A young army colonel, Joseph Desiré Mobutu, who was reportedly taking money from the Belgian and later the American intelligence agencies, seized control of the army. Five years later, after the CIA helped mercenaries put down internal rebellions, Mobutu swept away the civilian government and declared himself president. Most Americans promptly forgot about him and the Congo.

Mobutu, Zairians like to say, had his stomach in the West, but his heart and mind in the East. In the early 1970s, he visited the People's Republic of China and North Korea. He also became friends with Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania. He set up a one-party state, enrolled everyone in the Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR) from birth, ran public indoctrination sessions in "Mobutism," organized neighborhood committees to ensure ideological conformity, and even put his own likeness on the Zairian currency. The government took over the major industry—copper mining—and for a brief period nationalized—and looted—all foreign businesses.

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"Kleptocracy" in Action

President Mobutu rented Concorde planes for pleasure trips, bought European villas, and treated the national treasury as a personal bank account, apportioning funds to members of his tribe—the major beneficiaries of his rule—and to his personal presidential guard. He built no schools or hospitals in thirty years, leaving the churches to carry out most social services. Nearly two in ten infants die in the first year of life. There isn't even mail delivery; people must rent post office boxes.

Zaire was a "kleptocracy," based on corruption by anyone with authority, to the point of underpaid school teachers demanding bribes for grades, hospital guards extorting money from patients seeking admission, and policemen shaking down passersby. The major industries—copper and diamonds—were controlled by the state, and most others depended on government contracts and licenses. Government workers earned about $15 a month, less than the monthly cost of manioc root, which is the country's starchy staple. A doctor in a foreign-supported health program exclaimed, "How can a government like the U.S. support a regime like Zaire? There are teachers who faint in class because they haven't eaten. My children asked me for money for their teacher. She hadn't eaten since the day before. She didn't ask for money, but the children wanted to give it to her."

In 1980, regime opponents organized the Democratic Union for Social Progress (UDPS), calling for democratic change. The leaders spent most of the next decade in prison, "rusticated" in interior villages, or under house arrest. Carter appointee Ambassador Robert Oakley made a point of parking his limousine, American flag flying, outside the house of UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi to draw attention to his visits, and a group of congressmen met with UDPS leaders publicly at the Intercontinental Hotel in 1983. Departing oppositionists were beaten bloody by security police in the hotel parking lot. But Reagan-era ambassadors followed a policy of not meeting leading opponents of the regime. And Mobutu pleased the West by facilitating the intervention in Angola—and by sending troops at opportune moments to Chad, Djibouti, Côte d'Ivoire, and Gabon.

Then, in December 1989, Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was executed. The shots reverberated in Zaire. Mobutu's family and Ceausescu's were friends. Just the previous month, the Romanian Communist Party congress had received over a hundred Zairian guests and given them extensive television coverage. "Follow the model of Romania which is behind its chief," Mobutu had told Zairians. Then they saw the Romanian revolution. A French television videotape of the Ceausescus' execution was widely circulated in Zaire; Mobutu saw it, too. People began to distribute tracts calling for change and to speak freely in buses and taxis.

Democratic Pressures and Repression

Worried, Mobutu called for national consultations in January 1990, and traveled around the country for several weeks asking people what they wanted. Emboldened by the changes in the East, people answered: democracy. "For the first time you could hear people telling him publicly, 'We disagree with you,' " according to Nguz a Karl-i-Bond, Zaire's foreign minister. "You could see on his face that he was shocked." Nguz saw Mobutu unhappy again at an hour-long meeting with Secretary of State

Mobutu in Bandundu, 1977, by Moke (Zairian). Private Collection. Courtesy of the Center for African Art, New York City.

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Baker (on the dictator's yacht) in March 1990. "The U.S. used to tell him, 'Reform, you are making our task difficult with Congress,' " said Nguz. "Now it is, 'Change or we can't help you.' It was the first time they told him there is a linkage. He was upset."

Zairians believe that the meeting moved Mobutu to promise a multiparty system. Members of the government, the parliament, the diplomatic corps,and the national press gathered inside a large party conference center outside the capital on April 24, 1990. "Today I take official leave of the Popular Revolutionary Movement," he said. Then he choked and wiped his eyes. "You understand my emotion," he told them. "I am no longer chief of the party." Ordinary people danced in the streets.

That day, a lot of leading MPR members quit. "We telephoned each other," recalled Kititwa Tumansi, who had been ambassador to Moscow, Paris, and Rome; governor of Mobutu's home province; and first vice-president of the Central Committee. Within several days, he joined one hundred colleagues in announcing the creation of the Democratic Social Christian Party (PDSC).

The UDPS opened a party headquarters the week after the speech. Several hundred supporters appeared, but so did twenty security officers, who attacked the crowd with tear gas and bayonets, killing several as terrified people escaped through the streets. A seventeen-year old girl, among more than a dozen who were arrested, died after rape and torture in prison.

After April 24, students began meeting. Some were expelled. Professors went on strike. Then the private transport companies removed some buses from the subsidized line to the campus. Students began to seize the buses, hijack them, and force them to go to the campus, an hour out of town. They put signs on the buses: "Mobutu, murderer." Some buses were attacked by the civil guard, and students were beaten. By July, thousands of students were involved in these spontaneous, unorganized actions.

Mobutu had second thoughts about the democratic opening. Members of his family and tribe had pressured him against giving up their power and privilege. "He is at the head of an establishment," said Kamanda wa Kamanda, a smooth-talking man, former deputy secretary general of the Organization of African Unity, who left the MPR to create his own party. The tribal-party chiefs had said, "If you leave us, you leave with us." On May 3, Mobutu declared political gatherings illegal and announced that political parties wouldn't be allowed till the next year and that parliamentary elections wouldn't occur till 1992. Immediately protests erupted.

A soft-voiced, twenty-five-year-old economics student told me how he and other students had marched to town to protest the president's speech. Several students were beaten by security agents. A few days later they discovered a "student" with a walkie talkie, revolver, handcuffs, and military belt. "We beat him as a spy," he said. "He swore he was not alone at the university; there were three." The students went to the rooms of the others and found radios and cellular phones there. The law students set up a court; the three admitted the kidnapping and assassination of twenty-three students, were found guilty, and were beaten till they were rescued by civil guards.

Two days later, a student demonstration was attacked by gendarmes with tear gas and shots fired into the air. The students threw stones. That night the electricity in the university area was cut. "We saw three trucks of soldiers enter," recalled the student. "Many students went down to find out why the current had been cut. The soldiers began to massacre the students with guns and bayonets." The economics student and others fled from the courtyard to their rooms in about ten five-story white brick and concrete blocks surrounded by untended grass and shrubs. "I was there with my friend," he said. "We heard a knock on the door and a shout, 'Open,' but my friend refused to open. They threatened to break in. Then my friend opened the door and the man slashed him with a bayonet on the face. I jumped out of the window; we were on the first floor. I hid in a ditch until morning, then I fled."

The next day, the university was closed and any remaining students were shipped home. A parliamentary inquiry began five days later. The

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government said there had been a clash between students. But Kyungu Gabriel, a member of the regional assembly inquiry commission said, "We saw a list of students to kill that Immigration Chief Gata had written to the governor." Kyungu visited the campus. "We found blood everywhere in the rooms." He said about thirty students were dead or unaccounted for. A journalist for AZAP, the government press agency, filed a report that fifty had been killed; the account was not published.

Abbe Silengwe Kabila, a young priest in Shaba, told me that Mobutu's agents had been paying people not to have funerals for their dead children.

Eyes Toward America

The week after the massacre Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen arrived in Kinshasa. He reportedly pressed Mobutu to democratize, but said nothing about the massacre. However, the Belgian press picked up the issue. Belgian economic interests have decreased in the Congo; Mobutu is unpopular with the Belgian public; and the Flemish socialists, long leading the criticism of Mobutu and now part of a coalition government, would inevitably insist on critical action. The European Community also condemned the violence. Zairians were disappointed in the American reaction, which appeared to accept the government version of only one death and sought no international inquiry.

But people had stopped being afraid. Dozens of new political parties and newspapers were founded. A group of young professionals began meeting after the April speech on the manicured grounds of a young banker to discuss how they could promote a pluralist political culture. "Some of us are children of the men who ran the country," said one. "We don't approve of what they have done." Over his shoulder, past the Spanish-style villa, I could see white-clad players on a tennis court. They were dressed in sports pants and jogging clothes; nobody wore the ugly high-necked, pointy-lapeled Mobutu suits that have been foisted on the male population. On a bulletin board imprinted with "George Washington University," they sketched out the program of a series of "Forums for Development and Democracy," on guarantees for liberties, separation of powers, the role of the army, and privatization of public enterprises.

Ironically, given the history of U.S. support for Mobutu, all the oppositionists look to the Americans. For thirty years the American line has been, "There but for Mobutu goes chaos, tribalism." "They said, who would replace him, as if we were all imbeciles," said Kititwa Tumansi. "Imbeciles because we didn't know how to kill others as he did." At the Sunday afternoon gathering of young professionals, one man said earnestly, "Stability is not made around a man but around democratic institutions. The young professionals hold America partly responsible for the country's state. "They maintained in power a man who killed initiative," he said with emotion. "What did they invest here? Nothing." A banker interjected: "They have the biggest embassy in black Africa," and everyone laughed.

A debate went on inside the U.S. State Department—could Mobutu be counted on to make a democratic transition or should Washington drop him? But the U.S. line was, "We love your April 24 speech. Now don't forget it." Privately, however, in 1990, Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen shook his head and told me, "It's hopeless."

America's turn toward backing democracy was expressed by Ambassador William Harrop's first visits to opposition leaders. They were invited to the Fourth of July celebration, also for the first time. Previously, the Americans and others had presented the list of invitees for the approval of the Zairian protocol office—something they did not do in the communist world. "We have the impression that the Bush administration is timid," said UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi, a stocky, intense man who has spent the better part of the last decade in jail, exile, or house arrest and is not the least bit timid himself. He arrived at the Intercontinental Hotel for our interview dressed in chinos and an Amnesty International sweatshirt featuring a man behind bars and the dove of peace.

"Harrop came to visit me at my house," he

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said. "I was agreeably surprised. He gave me a counsel of moderation. I said, 'In our case, what is moderation'?" Melissa Wells, who became U.S. Ambassador in June 1991, continues the same policy.

Congressional Democrats had whittled away at aid programs during the 1980s, and in the fall of 1990 refused the administration's request for $4 million in military aid. They required that any economic assistance go through nongovernmental agencies. Yet even in 1991, Bush asked for money for the Mobutu government.

In the summer of 1991, things heated up again. A "National Conference" to set up a transitional government was boycotted by the opposition in August, because Mobutu had infiltrated his own people among delegates ostensibly representing 150 opposition organizations. In September, strikes erupted, with hundreds of thousands of protesters on Kinshasa's streets. Soldiers who had not been paid their $10-a-month salary went on the rampage, looting shops and homes and killing anyone who stood in their way. The French and Belgians sent troops to evacuate their nationals, and Washington urged Americans to leave. The Europeans made it clear they weren't backing Mobutu this time.

But a U.S. newspaper report quoted a "senior Western diplomat," obviously an American Embassy official, saying, "It is not in our interest that Mobutu suddenly disappear. What may replace him is unclear, and meanwhile, the situation could prove chaotic." It was the State Department line, retrieved from its time warp.

Old Patterns Continue

Under foreign pressure, Mobutu agreed to share power and named Tshisekedi prime minister in a coalition government. Meanwhile, foreign technical workers left the country, and some industries damaged by looters were shut down. Food shortages grew; experts predicted that electric power production would soon stop.

The effort to cobble together a government proved futile, as Mobutu insisted on retaining substantial power. Mobutu fired Tshisekedi; troops burned down a major opposition newspaper and went on the rampage again, looting homes and offices. In November, Cohen told the Senate Subcommittee on Africa that Mobutu had "lost the legitimacy to govern Zaire," but he insisted that "the best hope for Zaire is now genuine power-sharing between President Mobutu and the opposition." He argued that if Mobutu "left the scene, the unknown of what the military would do is something we would have to really worry about."

The old pattern continued. Mobutu refused to accept a representative national conference to determine the country's future. Nguz, who had tried his luck with the opposition, got angry that they wanted only Tshisekedi to head a new government and returned to the fold as Mobutu's new prime minister. In January, 1992, Nguz dismissed the National Conference, now dominated by the opposition. A few days later, a group of rebel soldiers tried unsuccessfully to overthrow Mobutu. Crowds were prematurely celebrating in the streets when loyalist forces recaptured the broadcast center.

At emergency Senate hearings on the situation in February, Cohen's comments on U.S. policy toward Mobutu bordered on fantasy: "We are not asking him to leave. He should remain so that he can control the military until an election is held." A month later, soldiers fired at antigovernment protesters and killed at least thirteen. □

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François Régis Mahieu

WHY CAN'T THE NORTH UNDERSTAND AFRICA?

The Africa whose ambiguity I discovered demonstrated to me the everpresent ambiguity of the social sciences. By a reverse movement, Africa began to force me to see my own society differently; Africa became its revealer.

—(G. Balandier, *Ambiguous Africa*)

How are we to understand Africa? Via universal models or by cataloguing its particularities?

The economic anthropology of Marshall Sahlins or Maurice Godelier, for example, has until now used specific behavioral patterns as a weapon against the universality of economic theory. Economists, on the other hand, and especially the new masters of the international agencies (IMF, World Bank), conceptualize African economy without the slightest contribution from anthropology.

And yet, in an ultimate irony, it would seem that the complexity of African society deserves the most sophisticated theories and techniques of the "universal" science; but will that science allow its own ambiguities to be revealed? To do so, the North would have to continue to take an interest in Africa, in its permanent economic crisis, its ethnic massacres, and its dictators.

But tired of practicing Afro-pessimism, the North soothes its conscience by abandoning the problem to the international development agencies: Africa should just conform to the standard patterns of development and stop affirming its otherness!

Nevertheless, Africa continues to stir interest, not by its abjection, but by its pure otherness, its folklore, its ethnicities: the African, it is asserted, is not like anyone else, and this difference must be proclaimed unequivocally, so as not to be contaminated by Western rationales. In this scenario, Africa is also negated—but this time it is its very tie to a universal humankind that is denied.

So it is that the North encounters several obstacles to understanding Africa, by at once denying it in its particulars and in its universality. The Africa described by economists is the object of standard models that deny its specialness. From this point of view, third-worldism and traditional liberalism have the same global vision.

Somewhat curiously, third-worldist conceptions do not integrate specifically African "differences" into their framework. Several factors contribute to this omission:

- "Differences" refer exclusively to specific behavioral patterns, whereas the structural problems of development are standard to the economies involved; and
- Development as a process of acculturation has succeeded so well that cultural particularities are no longer perceived.

Looking at structuralism, we find that the principal economist of this persuasion to have worked on Africa is Samir Amin, who had a decisive influence on his African colleagues in the 1970's. His success stems from the idea that a developing society is fertile ground for sociohistoric dialectic. His theory is thus composed of oppositions, of the exploitative relationships between the developed center and

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the underdeveloped periphery. Based on a heterogeneity of structures, underdevelopment is built upon permanent change. The development of underdevelopment occurs with the deterioration of the terms of exchange, the dislocation of the economies involved, the accrued forms of commercial or financial dependency, among the many dynamic phenomena that are particularly difficult to determine within the framework of pure economic theory.

Unfortunately, this structural dynamic is too global. It is founded on a multidisciplinarity in opposition to "neoclassical" theory; it acknowledges the "difference" of underdeveloped socioeconomic formations, but does not analyze it. Structural analysis and liberal analysis do not account for differences in Africa.

One thus searches desperately for some societal particularity for Black Africa. Structural indexes can always be found, such as the inequality of earnings, the deterioration of exchange terms, growth rates, or dependency indexes. Very soon, historical concepts of the center are used to plaster over peripheral social formations: societies organized around chiefs become feudal systems; younger children become the proletariat of the firstborn. This typically ethnocentric procedure is characteristic of a certain "economistic" anthropology.

But the structure of these peripheral social formations actually remains unknown. Thus the modalities of their transition from capitalism to socialism ("[f]or a transition from capitalism to socialism is what is clearly involved," says Amin) remain a matter of speculation. Nearly twenty years after the dawning of structuralism, questions about the lessons of history must still be asked.

The failure of African varieties of socialism, just like the failure of an authentic industrial capitalism, emphasizes the necessity for understanding the resistance to and the blocking out of imported values—in other words, the particularities of African society.

Between studies of primitive society—even those of the structuralists—and historical paste-up jobs of all kinds about the future of Africa, an immense void has resulted from the non-comprehension of the economic mechanisms of contemporary African society. This void is not diminished but rather expanded by theories of acculturation.

Mimesis

The African's imitation of the Westerner is a centerpiece of third-worldist arguments. Rooted in M.J. Herskovits's theory of acculturation (1952), it enjoys particular success in the critical analyses of African development. The thesis of cultural imperialism differs from third-worldist structuralism by its critique of the importance granted economic exploitation (transfers of value, for example) in the relationship of center to periphery. In fact, this economics derives directly from the theses of Marxist structuralism in 1969 and particularly from Louis Althusser's notion of the determination "in the last instance" of a society by the relations of production. African acculturation is seen as the consequence of "the growing, unifying force of capitalism on a world scale" and of an inevitable process of Westernization.

A certain paternalism can thus lead one to believe in the peculiar cultural fragility of Africa, which, because it lacks a written culture, would be the ideal target of Western cultural aggression. Samir Amin himself emphasizes the "handicap experienced by the rural primitive structures of black Africa" when compared to Eastern or South American societies.

Too often, such theses, found in popularly acclaimed books (René Dumont, Jacques Giri) about the block Africa suffers, betray the dream of an infantile Africa, experiencing its cultural underdevelopment as a relationship to the father (cf. Geza Roheim).

But economic and cultural dependency do not explain Africa's underdevelopment. The constant sidetracking experienced by development at the end of the seventies, a decade of budgetary sovereignty before the brakes of the IMF's "structural adjustment" programs were applied, must still be explained in African cultural terms.

In Africa there are signs that cannot be misunderstood. To the eternal question, "How are things going?" the answer is always "So-so, so-so" or again, "Too many prob-

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lems." These elliptical responses betray communal concerns: a weekend funeral, the calls for funds for a benefits group, self-interested visits, a village's grievances. These are the kinds of pressures that never let up on the spirit. But the northerner rarely notices such anthropological clues, and if he does take them into account, it is the better to particularize Africa.

Recognizing Differences

In the African cultural system, communal life is a central value. It has often been denied for the sake of a rejection of tribalism or to conform to a standard vision of development. Yet, according to anthropological studies, the village community is the first political entity in Sub-Saharan Africa, an entity reinforced by the fact that land disposition is not governed by a private property system but rather by ancestral users' rights that the community authority validates.

Membership in the community is traditionally governed by an ensemble of potential rights and obligations that are not codified in clear standards or norms; rather, membership is expressed in concrete terms by the transfer of money, time, goods, or courtesies.

This system is at once intergenerational (active adults support elders and the young) and intragenerational (among individuals of different social standing). Thus, the functional community (one expressed by its deeds) is the result of individual choices; and therein lies its complexity. The stronger its social determination, the more complex its range of individual rights and obligations becomes.

Certain critical generations are more burdened than others. This is the case, for example, of the "thirty-year-olds," who must discharge their obligation to the elders without being able to claim significant privileges over the younger. This imbalance is further aggravated by the community perception of sociofamilial status: a "big brother" crushed by his obligations will not recover his stakes, even with a grandiose funeral.

In this way, Africa realizes the prophecy of the Sermon on the Mount (Blessed be the poor), or yet again, the dream of equitable redistribution (Rawls).

How is this possible?

African societal obligations draw their strength not simply from a clear system of punishments but from a community uncertainty about the consequences of one's actions. It is impossible to escape this context without braving an uncertain realm of sanctions. This repressive force comprises one of the principal traits of the "community uncertainty principle" one hears about in so many passing conversations.

But this type of explanation has its limits: such social repression does not imply the impossibility of individual rationality, even in a society of illiterates. The economic agent in Africa is a human before being African.

If an African society does exist with its own distortions, these must not be exaggerated. The system of rights and obligations and the lexicographical priority of the community reckoning over any business calculations exist for any society. But these systems are most frequently abandoned, so strong remains the belief in a utilitarian ethic. Indeed, contemporary economic theory tends to posit a social being as preoccupied by an intergenerational calculus. Such a person, such a social calculator, is far more readily integrated into a society as complex as African society than the "homo oeconomicus" of the nineteenth century.

The most pressing danger amounts to a guilt reaction, and a taboo against the use of rationality when dealing with Africa, for example, by seeing in the "community uncertainty principle" the sole cause of the African community taxes. But African altruism is the result, in a difficult context, of clever strategic calculations. The more problems accumulate, the more the demand for protection from the community network grows, and the more the calculation becomes complex. This rationale is unknown in the bureaucracy of international agencies for development. Accordingly, various economic behavioral phenomena of overreaction, rigidity or distortion are overlooked, and their denial facilitates, in the end, the

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transformation of an economic adjustment into a political one.

More generally, the deflationary measures imposed under international supervision can be anticipated by the community. A loss of jobs or the withdrawal of a grant will be underwritten by the community; a salary increase will be anticipated as an increased burden on community taxes, and can be rejected. An adjustment program in the agricultural sector that does not take into account community constraints or the return on school investments will be doomed.

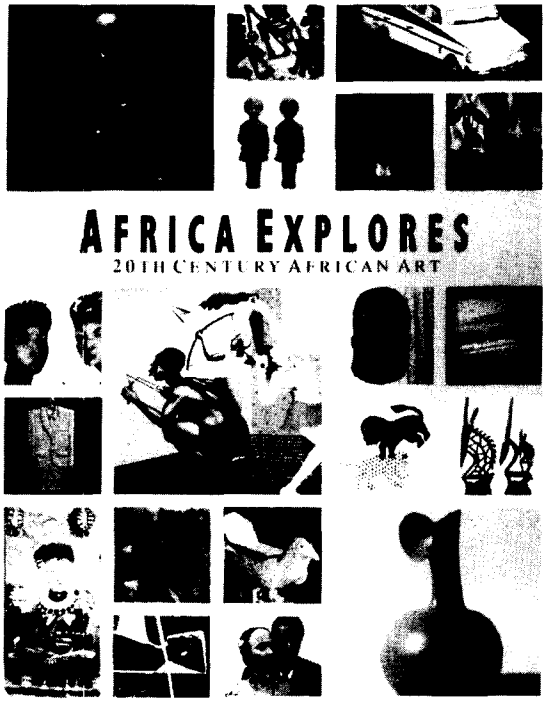
In this fashion the community expands the shape and number of its rules, and so becomes increasingly oppressive and inefficient. Such are the pessimistic dynamics that Côte d'Ivoire economist Mamadou Koulibaly describes in reference to the effects of "structural adjustment."

Community anticipation is then an inevitability in the classic outlook of political economics. From a social perspective the African community system is highly protective; from a development standpoint, it is highly disabling. Should it then be done away with?

To do so would be to forget that even when it is coercive, the community expresses a useful function and results from the strategies of its individual members. An optimal situation of rights and obligations does exist, and in certain cases an "optimal poverty" that macroeconomic policy cannot destroy in the name of global growth.

The community phenomenon is no more than the result of individual strategies undertaken to meet certain social situations. It is these situations, and especially those involving a lack of rights, that must change; and then only if the nationals of the underdeveloped countries have clearly expressed their preferences in this regard. Here once more, the North has a long way to go to understand that it cannot preach development without taking the preferences and the rationality of the underdeveloped into account.

Translated by JOHN ANZALONE □



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Susan George

USES AND ABUSES OF AFRICAN DEBT

The International Squeeze on Poor Countries

No phenomenon lasting for a decade deserves to be labeled a "crisis." It has thus become acutely embarrassing to speak in 1992 of the third-world debt "crisis." Certainly a chronic condition; arguably a cancer; some even say a conspiracy—but a crisis, no.

The longevity of Africa's debt is particularly worrisome. It is also bizarre. There seem no valid economic reasons whatever for the rich world to have made Africa drag its debt burden so far, for so long. One can, perhaps, understand why the banks are prolonging the agony in Latin America: they still have some $250 billion in shaky loans outstanding there.[1] Banks spent the eighties disengaging from the southern hemisphere, off-loading a significant portion of their dubious debt onto public institutions, diluting their portfolios, cashing in debt against tangible foreign assets ("debt-for-equity" swaps) and generally finding their way out of the Latin American woods that they entered with such enthusiasm in the 1970s. Meanwhile, however, they have made so many *other* stupid loans (for instance, to the U.S. energy or property development sectors) that one can see why they are trying to squeeze every last penny out of the likes of Argentina, Mexico, or Brazil.

But Africa? What logic can there be for grinding down a whole continent in the name of an insignificant debt? Before proceeding further, we'll specify which "Africa" we're talking about. The whole of the African continent owes its public and private creditors $283 billion, but a large chunk of that ($119 billion or 42 percent) has been lent to North African countries, including heavies like Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco. The debt of Egypt alone amounts to about one-sixth of the African continent's entire debt burden—at least it did until Mr. Mubarak received spectacular debt relief as a reward for fighting on the "right" side in the Gulf War. To say "Thanks, Hosni," the United States reduced Egypt's debt stock in one grand gesture from $51.2 to $39.9 billion, a drop of 24 percent, and one that no other third-world country has come close to meriting.

Since lumping North Africa with the rest of the continent badly skews reality, we will deal from now on only with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), whose debt, at the end of 1990, amounted to $164 billion. A mere $28 billion (17 percent) of that sum was owed to private banks, nearly all of them European. This relatively small exposure was furthermore concentrated in just a handful of countries (Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire stand out). In other words, 83 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's total debt—and virtually all the debt of the very poorest SSA countries—is owed to public sources: either to OECD country governments or to multilateral agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Herein lies the mystery: $136 billion worth of debts reimbursable to public lending sources represents a crushing load for Africa, but for the said public lending sources the same $136 billion is, frankly, peanuts. Yet these agencies have kept a strict watch on Africa, holding its

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figurative and collective nose to the grindstone. Those who say offhandedly that the level of Africa's debt doesn't really matter because Africa isn't paying back anyway have not looked seriously at the figures. Since 1982, the continent has been bled dry in order to reimburse its wealthy northern creditors.

Between the beginning of 1982 and the end of 1991, every month, for one hundred and twenty months, SSA somehow scraped together an average of nearly a billion dollars for purposes of debt service. In 1990 and 1991, for example, total service payments (interest and principal) represented a shade over 7 percent of total outstanding debt. Latin America provides a more usurious rate of return, true, and for northern governments and multilateral institutions 7 percent may not be the most lucrative imaginable return on capital, but for the world's poorest continent, it's not bad. The question most people would ask, hearing yet another report of hunger in Africa, is why such countries should be required to provide a return on capital *at all*.

In addition, most normal people would assume that in exchange for this Herculean effort, the continent had at least reaped a substantial reward. Unfortunately, this is not the case. "Herculean" is also the wrong adjective to describe the effort, better labeled "Sisyphean." In spite of a decade of sacrifices, in spite of well over one hundred billion dollars sent northward in debt service alone, by the end of 1990 Sub-Saharan Africa's debt had more than doubled. From $77 billion in 1982, it had risen to $164 billion, an increase of 113 percent.

Seen from the African point of view, then, debt is ever more intolerable. Yet seen from a global perspective, SSA's debt can only be called insignificant. We can measure its importance in a variety of ways. For example, in 1990, Africa's share of total third-world debt was only 11 percent. We will abstain from comparing Sub-Saharan African debt to the total public debt of the United States so as not to provoke hilarity among the readers of a serious journal. Taking a different yardstick, Africa's debt accumulated over many years amounts to only 16 percent of the losses sustained (at least on paper) in a single afternoon of October 1987 when world stock markets crashed. It also represents less than 5 percent of the total annual sales of the world's top two hundred transnational corporations.

In other words, Africa's debt is so modest as to be no threat to anyone except to Africans. Even in the most unlikely event that all forty-three SSA countries suddenly and collectively decided to stop servicing their debt, the world financial system would just keep trundling along, its computer screens registering scarcely a blip.

Because Africa's debt is minuscule by global standards, because it is mostly owed to public creditors, because it causes such obvious hardship, you might think that it would be particularly amenable to a political solution. You would be wrong. At the end of 1991, the United Nations's optimistically titled publication *Africa Recovery* wanly reported, under the headline "Donors stalled on 'Trinidad' relief," that "discussions under way for over a year among Western creditors offer only the prospect of a watered-down version of the so-called 'Trinidad' proposals which . . . would significantly help a number of African countries."[2]

The wine being thus "watered down" was pretty insipid to begin with. The "Trinidad Terms," as first proposed by British Prime Minister John Major, could *at best* reduce Africa's debt by $34 billion (if all low-income African countries were to be made eligible for relief, which is highly unlikely). These "terms" would probably touch only $18 billion of SSA's total debt—this, in any case, is the amount being "watered down." Even if the higher figure were lopped off the total, it could change little or nothing with regard to the actual payments required. This may sound odd, but is easily explained. Today, although making unprecedented sacrifices including the literal starvation of millions of its people, Africa as a whole is still paying only about half of the debt service theoretically due. If the stock of debt were to be reduced only marginally, that is, by much less than half, this could serve mainly to free up cash for increasing other interest payments.

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The "Trinidad Terms" follow the "Toronto Terms," which follow—well, never mind, since no proposal to reduce African debt has ever made much headway. Under the "Toronto Terms," the most debt-distressed countries, after protracted negotiations, finally obtained agreements saving them all of one hundred million dollars annually in actual cash outflow. Even these minor savings were painfully arrived at, because each of the debtors had to negotiate separately with the so-called "Paris Club," which represents all the creditors. Not only must the debtor face the gang of its creditors alone; it is also subjected to what one well-placed observer has called the Paris Club's "arcane protocols and procedures which are profoundly inimical to the interests of debtors or indeed to the achievement of sensibly negotiated outcomes"—this from a man who until recently had spent most of his career as a high-ranking official at the World Bank![3]

If we keep on going at this rate, the World Bank estimates that Africa's actual annual cash savings in debt service could reach a breathtaking $310 million by the year 2000.[4] Every summer when the G-7 are about to hold their annual jamboree summit, there is a flurry of rumors that African debt will at last be seriously dealt with. Just as regularly, nothing happens and everyone goes home. The United States is invariably singled out as the chief stonewaller: the U.S. Treasury takes a hard line on debt—anybody's debt—with the possible exception of its own. The only hopeful sign for Africa so far on this front is that in 1991, the United Kingdom for the first time broke free of the U.S. iron debt-management grip, announcing that it would apply the Trinidad terms by itself even if nobody else did. This could be a valuable precedent for other European countries, which have, to date, shown a remarkable unity in their craven deferral to their American partner.

Reimbursement of Africa's debt has led to unimaginable human suffering. African economies have been wrenched by "structural adjustment" measures dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Thirty of the forty-three SSA countries have in place formal adjustment agreements with the Fund, while most of the others have instituted policies so close to the usual IMF prescriptions as to be undistinguishable. The purpose of structural adjustment is to generate "surplus" cash so that debt can be serviced. It is not an exaggeration to state that the IMF and the Bank now act as collection agencies for the creditor countries.

The effects of their policies are well known. In all these countries, real wages have plummeted by anything from 30 to—in extreme cases—90 percent. Most people don't have paid jobs anyway and rely heavily on the so-called "informal sector"—about 60 percent of the urban work force is not "employed" by anyone. Rural-urban migrants gravitate to the "informal sector" as well in an attempt to make ends meet, but as the International Labor Organization has pointed out, "[T]he informal sector is a labor sponge with a finite capacity of absorption."

Under structural adjustment programs, admittedly bloated public administrations have also massively sacked personnel, adding to the ranks of the unemployed. Public investment has virtually ceased. Hospitals and schools are dilapidated, without drugs or books. The social gains of the sixties and seventies, where they existed, have been eroded or destroyed. For example, the number of children enrolled in primary school increased dramatically in the 1970s, but declined from 1980 onward. Women have, as elsewhere, borne much of the brunt of adjustment, and their workload has increased.

One positive point: UNICEF has made considerable progress in vaccinating African children and is not averse to pointing out that a greater proportion of children has been immunized against preventable diseases in parts of Africa than in the Bronx. But this does not mean that the vaccinated children are healthier. The World Food Program reports that malnutrition now strikes about 40 percent of African children compared to 25 percent in 1985. Recent harvests have been good in most of Africa, but production still does not keep pace with population growth.

In 1986, 46 percent of all World Food Programs (WFP) emergency food aid operations were destined for Africa; in 1990, 85

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percent of them were. The WFP estimated that in 1991, at least thirty million Africans required emergency food aid. Overall food import needs are projected at thirty to forty million tons by the year 2000—at prices no one can foresee today. So structural dependency on food aid will continue. Today, three-quarters of all food aid to Africa is in the form of wheat, which cannot be grown in Africa. A lot of it is sold on ordinary markets at ordinary prices, with the "counterpart funds" of these sales supposedly benefiting the hungry. Sometimes they may, but meanwhile, people with purchasing power acquire a taste for bread and other wheat products, driving imports up further.[5]

Poverty, hunger, illness, illiteracy—the litany is familiar. Nor is Africa's plight improved by the maintenance of costly military machines or by leaders whose priorities include the purchase of multiple mansions abroad or the construction of outsized replicas of Saint Peter's and four-story statues of themselves at home. Whatever indicator one cares to choose, the African disaster of the past decade is, or should be, obvious to all. That the debt crisis has been a major factor compounding this disaster should be equally obvious.

So the crucial question really is, Why does the "crisis" endure and the cancer fester? Why do creditors continue to demand their pound of flesh? At first glance, the situation is indeed wholly confounding—Africa can't afford to pay, and the West doesn't need the money. So why the unremitting bloodletting? Creditors have major responsibility for the impasse, but in their own way, so have the debtors.

One reason the cancer is metastasizing is that African governments have never seriously sought to unite under a single debt-negotiating banner although they have had every reason to do so—and this is what bodies like the Organization of African Unity are supposed to be for. This inability to arrive at a common stance has made it even easier for creditors to isolate and browbeat individual debtors when they take the Paris Club witness stand. (Note, however, that this incapacity to unify is not peculiar to Africa. Latin American debtors owe three times as much as Africans and are far fewer in number, but they too have remained divided and therefore conquered.)

The consequences of this failure are grave and have proved that disunity is a luxury Africa can ill afford. Many African governments still appear to be under the illusion that their countries are more important in the world scheme of things than they are. They also seem to believe that their legitimate concerns are genuinely taken into consideration by the industrialized countries. Sadly, neither is true. Yet many Africans, when told this bluntly by people who are basically on their side, still protest vehemently, insisting that they *are* important because the rich world cannot do without their raw materials and their cheap labor.

This view may have been valid in the 1960s, but the world of the 1990s is a very different place. Naturally, those who run this world are interested in safeguarding whatever parts of Africa contain strategic materials unobtainable elsewhere, but these parts make up an astonishingly small portion of the continent. The overwhelming majority of African countries rely for their foreign exchange earnings on run-of-the-mill commodities, increasingly produced in Latin America and especially Asia as well, and often obtainable with less fuss and bother than in Africa.

Prices for these raw materials have lately dropped to the lowest levels on record since the 1930s. Many respected authorities, including the World Bank, have claimed to see light at the end of the tunnel, repeatedly announcing that the commodities situation is about to take a turn for the better. All the figures belie this optimism. Nineteen-ninety was a bad year, 1991 was dire. Of fourteen commodities monitored by the United Nations in 1991, only one—iron ore—showed a modest gain in price. Sugar, in perpetual doldrums, fell by a further 27 percent, bauxite and groundnuts by nearly 20. Coffee and cocoa, traditionally two of Africa's most important exports, seem destined to remain on the down escalator: their prices have been in continual decline for five and seven years, respectively.

International officials *must*, in a sense, voice optimism, because the whole point of the structural adjustment programs they have

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devised is to improve countries' export earnings. Without exports there's no hard currency, and without hard currency there's no debt service. Thus the best efforts of the Fund and the Bank are concentrated on what economists call "tradeables"—anything you can sell abroad—while "non-tradeables" are neglected. Non-tradeables aren't just whatever local people eat, live in, and so on, but are roads and public transport, sewage and water systems, schools and hospitals, and anything else that, by definition, cannot be uprooted and exchanged for dollars, francs, etc.

The export-led strategy in Africa is, however, a dismal failure. According to a study undertaken by the Transnational Institute (TNI), to be published in 1992, Africa simply cannot hope to emerge from the current crisis so long as it continues to rely on exports of traditional products. The TNI research team looked at all the usual factors determining demand, but also interviewed commodity traders, promising them anonymity. These traders, who are the actual purchasers of African raw materials, paint a gloomy picture indeed. With the single exception of tea, TNI found that the present practices and future intentions of these purchasers are highly unfavorable to Africa.

This is all the more serious because trade is, on the whole, thriving. GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) labeled the 1980s "a dynamic decade for world trade." Perhaps so, but during this dynamic decade, Africa's trade of goods and services regularly declined—the only region in the world where this was the case. Asia's annual trade growth, in contrast, was close to 8 percent.[6] Where would Africa be if we were in a period of world trade recession?

Probably so low as to be statistically insignificant. Already, by 1989, Africa's share of world trade was down to a mere 2½ percent. Roughly 60 percent of even that tiny figure can be ascribed to trade transactions carried out by South Africa and the North African countries, which GATT lumps in the "Africa" totals.[7] This means that the whole of the rest of Africa currently represents no more than 1½ percent of world trade. One can almost hear the sound of SSA sliding off the world map. As for the presumed advantages of cheap African labor, international business seems unimpressed. It is investing little in the continent and is sometimes withdrawing altogether. In 1982, private sources invested a total of $2.2 billion in Africa. Though not a princely sum as these figures go, it turned out to be the best one of the decade and was followed by two years of disinvestment. By the end of the eighties, the annual inflow of investment had crept back up to about a billion dollars, but this was still only 3 percent of total annual private investment in "developing countries." Again, Asia took the lion's share.[8]

Africans themselves seem to have little confidence in the economies of their own countries, structural adjustment or no structural adjustment. Although the Bank and the Fund always claim that their programs will reverse the trend, the OECD (under?) estimates flight capital from the region at some $40 billion. To date, wealthy Africans show no signs of bringing their money home.[9]

Only foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have taken pity on Africa. They have increased their contributions from six hundred million dollars at the outset of the 1980s to a billion dollars at the end of the decade. Their grants now equal total private investment. Today, Africa has to count more on aid and less on trade.

Events in Eastern Europe haven't helped. Although one cannot make the case—at least not yet—that aid to the former Eastern bloc has "diverted" funds from Africa, as many African leaders claim it has, it is true that "Sub-Saharan Africa [is] the only major developing region not to have experienced an increase in overall financial flows," according to the OECD. In 1990, the United States increased its aid to SSA (to $985 million) and so did France (to $4.4 billion), but Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom all reduced theirs.[10]

In calculations of available aid, people sometimes forget that the former USSR and Eastern Europe used to be donors themselves—modest ones, perhaps, but donors all the same. They gave significant amounts of aid to Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique. In a not

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atypical year before the demise of the communist bloc, Tanzania received $21 million from the USSR while Zambia and Sudan had all their outstanding debt to East bloc countries rescheduled on highly favorable terms.[11]

There could be a hidden advantage for Africa in the liberalization of Eastern Europe if these countries begin to consume significant quantities of African products. When the Berlin Wall was first breached, Western Europeans sat spellbound watching television pictures of East Germans devouring bananas as if they were nectar and ambrosia. But these economies won't be genuinely affluent for several years at best, and, meanwhile, the cheap and highly skilled workers and the astonishing investment opportunities in the former communist countries are likely to make investment in Africa appear even less attractive, if not insane.

Thus one important reason that SSA's debt crisis has dragged on and on is simply that Africa hasn't the economic voice to make itself heard or the commercial clout to make its presence felt. Economically and commercially, it occupies too little space to force the world system to take much notice of its problems. Africa's *potential* is indeed enormous, as many African leaders never tire of pointing out. But the real questions remain: Who needs this potential? For what? And when?

Another answer to the enigma of enduring debt is a political and ideological one. The debtors' collective failure to confront the creditors has given the latter an unprecedented opportunity to carry out the most enormous, ideologically driven economic experiment ever devised in history. On behalf of the creditors, the Terrible Twins of Bretton Woods—the Fund and the Bank—are forcibly applying orthodox, neoclassical, unfettered market economy doctrine to most of the southern hemisphere and to the African continent in particular.

The existence of significant debts, or in the case of small and weak countries, even of insignificant ones, provides outsiders with huge leverage over economic and political management. Governments have no choice but to give up much of their sovereignty to their creditors and their creditors' proxies. These "lenders of last resort" hold the keys of the entire world economic and financial system and are thus in a position to make offers impossible to refuse.

It's not that all the measures the Twins impose are, in and of themselves, harmful. No reasonable person denies that some form of "structural adjustment" is necessary in Africa and elsewhere. Except for the United States, which is privileged to print and mint the world's standard unit of account, countries cannot live beyond their means forever any more than individuals or families can. The problem with adjustment as now practiced, however, is the simultaneous and dogmatic application of an identical model to dozens of countries at once. Every country must devalue its currency (thus largely canceling out the supposed benefits of devaluation, since everyone's goods become cheaper on world markets at once). Everyone must attempt to export the same limited range of raw materials or slightly more sophisticated products to shrinking markets.

No one denies either that the state probably has no place in the direct production of goods and that markets should be allowed to do what they do well. What they do not do well is protect the weaker and more vulnerable members of society. Adjustment measures theoretically designed to help, say, small farmers and food production in Africa turn out on closer inspection to have the opposite effect. As the International Labor Organization points out,

> [O]ne of the reasons for the growing extent of malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa is related to the policy of price liberalization for agricultural commodities . . . an improved pricing policy does not automatically alleviate rural poverty. The majority of farmers in the region cultivate small plots of land and do not produce sufficient marketable surplus to benefit from higher producer prices. In some cases, food-deficit farmers may actually become worse off.[12]

But such measures are part of the economic canon, and damn the consequences. The whole continent has become a laboratory for an experiment *en grandeur nature*.

Although the near-universal imposition of the free-market model is, from the creditors'

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point of view, a major achievement, politically, too, the debt crisis has its uses. One need not subscribe to conspiracy theory to recognize the political advantages that debt has conferred on the creditors. Although these creditors almost certainly did not plan on these advantages when the debt crisis first began to assume major importance, this does not mean that they are now prepared to throw them away.

Debt is used as a weapon of what I have called elsewhere "Financial Low Intensity Conflict," or FLIC, a new kind of warfare far better adapted to the late twentieth century than traditional forms of warfare like invasion and occupation.[13] These more "primitive" techniques—unless they are exceptionally quick and "clean," as in the Gulf War—are no longer accepted by most Western public opinion.

Nor can "primitive" warfare achieve the aims of today's sophisticated aggressor. What, after all, is the objective of war? As Karl von Clausewitz put it in his classic work *On War*, "War is an act of violence whose goal is to force the adversary to do our will." Debt provides a powerful lever for forcing the third-world "adversary" to submit to the will of the creditors. We have already mentioned several of the advantages they may find in maintaining the debt burden:

They can obtain raw materials on the cheapest possible terms. As noted above, dozens of debtor countries are competing to unload primary commodities. Glut and structurally depressed prices result as the debtors' attempt to export even more in the vain hope of at least keeping revenues stable. The system is self-perpetuating. Northern industry benefits, although the savings are rarely passed on to the consumer.

Through debt-for-equity swaps, one can take over assets and infrastructure, although this technique has rarely been applied in Africa because the continent offers few attractive targets for takeover. On the other hand, there are obvious financial advantages in continuing to receive interest payments.

Financial low-intensity conflict is also preferable to more naked intervention because it is so low profile. Most people in the creditor countries know little and care less about third-world debt. It seems boring and gets no television coverage. The connections between debt and marginally "sexier" subjects—epidemics, food crises, and the like—are almost never made.

Debtors dependent on the good will of creditors are also unlikely to challenge the dominant—or new, if you will—world order. The decade of crisis has put a stop to whatever attempts the South once made to obtain collective advantages through the United Nations and other forums. The "Group of 77" leads a nominal existence. Gone are the demands for a New International Economic Order, for binding codes of conduct for transnational corporations, or transfers of technology under favorable terms. The only items on the North-South agenda are privatization, competitiveness, and structural adjustment. This change of vocabulary in the discourse of international relations reflects one of most important and least noticed phenomena of recent years. Debt makes debtors timid and creditors bold.

The not-so-subtle formulae for making the third world shut up and abandon its long-standing demands are accompanied by a *de facto* assault on the very notion of the state. The ascendancy of the World Bank and the IMF includes a substitution of their own power for the traditional powers of the state. Among the prerogatives now being dictated from outside are

- Control over the currency. Indebted countries must devalue when instructed to do so. This is supposed to make exports more competitive, but the effects are often negligible because so many countries are devaluing at once.
- The fixing of macro-economic policy. The framework is set by the structural adjusters; only the details are left to the government.
- The choices of foreign policy. The classic case is the carrot/stick approach applied to Egypt during the Gulf War.
- The "monopoly of legitimate violence." At the Bank-Fund annual meeting in Bangkok in October 1991, the managing director of the Fund, Michel Camdessus, for the first time

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made clear that his institution would henceforward look much more closely at the military expenditures of its "clients." In his view the cessation of cold war hostilities made such expenditures obsolete. While we may welcome any measures leading to disarmament anywhere, the ability to make war and peace and to defend itself have always been essential to the nature of the state.

The indebted state is thus left with its judicial functions and, above all, the maintenance of *internal* public order. This is one crucial state function the creditors want nothing to do with. Austerity measures—particularly the doubling or tripling of prices for basic staples—have led to riots in over two dozen debtor countries and have caused at least four thousand deaths with many thousands more wounded or detained.[14] Outside managers do not want to be seen as involved, much less as interfering in such circumstances, and leave local police forces to put down rioters. Thus the real causes of the protests may never become visible to the outside world.

Just as the state is undermined, so are those parts of the United Nations system that could be most useful to the debtor countries. The Bank and the Fund have much more influence over, say, health and education than the World Health Organization and UNESCO.

How—if at all—might Africa escape debt bondage and begin to emerge from the depths? Here we enter the realm of utopia. Realpolitik seems to militate almost entirely against an equitable solution for Africa, and only the extremely guarded optimism of the French belief that the worst is not always certain can be of some comfort. Assuming the worst indeed isn't absolutely certain, what should Africa aim for? African leaders should make clear to anyone who will listen that the continent simply cannot survive, much less develop, on the basis of "export-led growth." The needs of Africans must come before those of outsiders, who, in any event, are buying fewer and fewer African products.

The Economic Commission for Africa has published a detailed diagnosis, analysis, and economic plan, which is at once more logical and more humane than the Bank-Fund austerity scenario. Titled *The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation,* it provides the necessary macro-economic guidelines that we do not intend to summarize here.[15]

It is, however, important to recall that pure and simple debt cancellation could lead to cutting Africa out of the world system altogether, and that African leaders should beware any Greeks bearing gifts of this kind. Debt relief must be linked to a coherent development plan, including much greater popular participation and genuine democracy. Unless African nations, singly or jointly, can propose a plan bold enough to capture the imagination and the attention of the industrialized countries' governments and citizens, they will be forgotten in the New World Order.

Africa's leadership must above all give their creditors credible guarantees that African peoples will be full partners in the enterprise. If the leaders promise that freedom of association and popular organizations will be encouraged and nurtured, that human and democratic rights will be fully respected, then they can propose a solution to debt based on a new social contract. The creditors, who claim that democracy is all-important, would look foolish and hypocritical if they refused to listen.

SSA should propose to stop paying debt service to public creditors (83 percent of the total) in hard currency. They should contract to pay in local currency over a long period and to put their payments into national or regional development funds whose purpose would be threefold.

First, such funds would provide financing to popular organizations for their own projects and for which they were prepared to supply the labor (building schools or clinics, improving village water supply, feeder roads, and so on).

Second, such funds would provide a basis for revolving credit funds granting small loans to farmers and would-be entrepreneurs. An excellent model for this kind of popular credit scheme is the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, where repayment rates run over 99 percent. Participants are given training in basic numeracy and accounting, and they must also adhere

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to certain basic development principles. The African traditional "tontine" (common fund) provides a similar model where social pressure to reimburse is strong because the existence of the group depends on it.

Third, such funds would provide wages for workers engaged in environmental rehabilitation and renewal. Ecological destruction in Africa is widespread and growing. So long as people cannot be paid to plant trees, build terraces, shore up dunes, and so forth, the destruction will spread, because people are too busy surviving to be able to work without pay.

For the creditors, such a scheme would be equivalent to debt cancellation, but would keep Africa inside the system. Creditor countries, through their aid programs, should "anchor" such funds with hard currency and should monitor the agreements so that inflation does not ensue from injection of too much local currency into the system. "In-kind" payments could be accepted as well. For example, X trees planted, Y schools built, could lead to Z dollars of debt forgiveness.

Such a plan would have many advantages. It would free hard-currency export earnings for more useful purposes than debt service and would simultaneously reduce the pressures to export, thus gradually allowing commodity prices to rise. Since a substantial part of the hard currency thus freed would be used to purchase products from northern industries, creditors would receive much the same income as before. But instead of sterile inflows to governments and multilateral agencies, the money would create some jobs in the North and Africans would get something in exchange for it. The continent would then participate in the world trading system as a partner, not a beggar. Popular energies for genuine development would be mobilized, making thousands of communities and individuals more self reliant. Environmental ruin could be halted and reversed.

At present, genuine political will to cure the debt cancer is lacking on both sides and imagination is at an even lower ebb. If at least a few African leaders had the courage to declare publicly that they are, given the means, prepared to share full responsibility for development with their own civil societies, we could move into a new phase. If they are not, and we do not, then the 1990s risk being for Africa not just another lost decade, but a deadly one. □

Notes

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all debt figures are derived directly or calculated from OECD, *Financing and External Debt of Developing Countries, 1990 Survey,* OECD, Paris 1991. I prefer this source to the World Bank's better known *World Debt Tables* because the OECD relies on creditors' reports, not on the "debtor reporting system" of the Bank. Rightly or wrongly, I believe that creditors are more likely to report accurately how much they are owed and what service payments they have received than debtors are to say how much they owe and what they have paid. The OECD's figures also include short-term debt whereas the Bank's do not; short-term debt usually represents at least 15 percent of a country's total obligations. The OECD and the Bank keep promising to "harmonize" their debt reporting systems and their figures: for example, the OECD estimates total third-world debt at $1450 billion, the Bank at "only" $1300 billion. This would greatly facilitate the task of the researcher, but so far it hasn't happened.

[2] *Africa Recovery,* United Nations, December 1991, p. 3.

[3] Percy S. Mistry, *African Debt Revisited: Procrastination or Progress?* Forum on Debt and Development (FONDAD), The Hague, 1991, paragraph 4.10.

[4] Mistry, ibid., paragraphs 4.16 and 7.09.

[5] World Food Programme *Journal,* No. 19, January-March 1992 and Solagral, *Courrier de la Planète,* No. 4, February 1992, passim.

[6] GATT, *International Trade 89–90,* Vol. I, p. 15 and chart 5, p. 19.

[7] GATT, ibid. Vol. II, Table III.39 and (calculated from) Table III.43.

[8] OECD, op. cit., Table III.6.

[9] *Africa Recovery,* op. cit., Note 2, p. 9.

[10] Ibid., pp. 8–9.

[11] OECD, *Development Cooperation 1987 Report,* Paris 1988, section on CMEA Countries, from p. 153.

[12] International Labour Organization, *African Employment Report 1988,* Jobs and Skills program.

[13] Susan George, *A Fate Worse Than Debt* (New York: Grove Press, 1988).

[14] The Franco-Peruvian researcher Denis Sulmont has made a tally of these riots and their consequences, relying mostly on Western press sources for the numbers of casualties. It is thus entirely possible that these figures are underestimates.

[15] ECA, AAF-SAP, E/ECA/CM.15/6/Rev.3, United Nations, 1989.

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Chinua Achebe

AFRICAN LITERATURE AS CELEBRATION

Reflections of a Novelist

There is an artistic taboo among my people, the Igbo of Nigeria. It is a prohibition—on pain of being finished off rather quickly by the gods—against laying a proprietary hand on even the smallest item in that communal enterprise which they undertook from time, and to which they gave the name *mbari*. *Mbari* was a celebration through art of the world and of the life lived in it. It was performed by the community on command by its presiding deity, usually the earth goddess, Ana. Ana combined two formidable roles in the Igbo pantheon as fountain of creativity in the world and custodian of the moral order in human society. An abominable act is called *nso-ana*, taboo-to-Earth.

Once every so often, and in her absolute discretion, this goddess would instruct the community through divination to build a home of images in her honor. The diviner would travel through the village and knock on the doors of those chosen by Ana for her work. These chosen people were then blessed and separated from the larger community in a ritual with more than a passing resemblance to their own death and funeral. Thereafter, they moved into the forest and, behind a high fence and under the instruction and supervision of master artists and craftsmen, they constructed a temple of art.

Architecturally, it was a simple structure, a stage formed by three high walls supporting a peaked roof; but in place of a flat floor there was a deck of steps running from one side wall to the other and rising almost to the roof at the back wall. This auditorium was then filled to the brim with sculptures in molded earth and clay, and the walls with murals in white, black, yellow, and green. The sculptures were arranged carefully on the steps. At the center of the front row sat the earth goddess herself, a child on her left knee and a raised sword in her right hand. She is mother and judge.

To her right and left, other deities took their places. Human figures, animals (perhaps a leopard dragging along the carcass of a goat), figures from folklore, history, or pure imagination; forest scenes, scenes of village and domestic life; everyday events, abnormal scandals; set pieces from past displays of *mbari*, new images that had never been depicted before—everything jostled together for space in that extraordinary convocation of the entire kingdom of human experience and imagination.

When all was ready, after months or even years of preparation, the makers of *mbari*, who had been working in complete seclusion, sent word to the larger community. A day was chosen for the unveiling and celebration of the work with music and dancing and feasting in front of the house of *mbari*.

I used the words *stage* and *auditorium* to describe the *mbari* house; let me explain. Indeed, the two side walls and the back wall encompassed a stage of sorts, in which the community in the foreground is the audience looking into the enclosure with its festive walls and the massed arrangement of sculptures on the steps. But I believe the event does invite a

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second way of apprehension in which the roles are reversed, and those still and silent dignitaries of molded earth seated on those steps in the royal pavilion become the spectators of the world as a lively scene.

The problem some people have with the word *celebration* may arise, I suspect, from too narrow a perspective on it. *Mbari* extends the view, opens it out to meanings beyond the mere remembering of blessings or happy events; it deliberately sets out to include other experiences—indeed, all significant encounters that humans make in their journeys through life, especially new, unaccustomed, and thus potentially threatening, encounters.

For example, when Europe made its appearance in Igbo society out of travelers' tales into the concrete and alarming shape of the district officer, the artists immediately gave him a seat among the molded figures of *mbari,* complete with his peaked helmet and pipe. Sometimes, they even made room for his bicycle and his native police orderly. To the Igbo mentality art must, among other uses, provide a means to domesticate that which is wild; it must act like the lightning conductor that arrests destructive electrical potentials and channels them harmlessly to earth. The Igbo insist that any presence that is ignored, denigrated, denied acknowledgment and celebration can become a focus for anxiety and disruption. To them, celebration is the acknowledgment of a presence, the courtesy of giving to everybody proper due.

Therefore, the celebration of *mbari* was no blind adoration of a perfect world or even a good world. It was an acknowledgment of the world as these particular inhabitants perceived it in reality, in their dreams and imagination. The white district officer was obviously not a matter for dancing. But he was not alone in that. Consider another disquieting presence—a man whose body was covered with the spots of smallpox, a disease so dreaded that it was personified and alluded to only in quiet, deferential tones of appeasement; he was called the decorator of its victims, not their killer. As for the woman depicted in copulation with a dog, was there much to choose, as oddities go, between her and the white man?

I offer *mbari* as one illustration of my precolonial inheritance—of art as celebration of my reality; of art in its social dimension; of the creative potential in all of us and of the need to exercise this latent energy again and again in artistic expression and communal, cooperative enterprises.

And now I come to what I have chosen to call my Middle Passage, my colonial inheritance. To call my colonial experience an inheritance may surprise some people. But everything is grist to the mill of the artist. True, one grain may differ from another in its powers of nourishment; still, we must, in the manner of those incomparable artists of *mbari,* accord appropriate recognition to every grain that comes our way.

It is not my intention, however, to engage in a detailed evaluation of the colonial experience, but merely to ask what possibility, what encouragement, there was in this episode of our history for the celebration of our own world, for the singing of the song of ourselves, in the din of an insistent world and song of others.

Colonization may indeed be a very complex affair, but one thing is certain: You do not walk in, seize the land, the people, the history of others, and then sit back and compose hymns of praise in their honor. To do that would amount to calling yourself a bandit; and you don't want to do that. So what do you do? You construct very elaborate excuses for your action. You say, for instance, that the people in question are worthless and quite unfit to manage themselves or their affairs. If there are valuable things like gold or diamonds that you are carting away from their territory, you proceed to prove that they don't own them in the real sense of the word—that the people and the valuables just happened to be lying around the same place when you arrived. Finally, if the worse comes to worst, you may even be prepared to question whether such as they can be, like you, fully human. From denying the presence of people standing there before you, you end up questioning their very humanity. Therefore the agenda of the colonist did not, could not, make provision for the celebration of the world of the colonized; not even celebration of the guarded and problematic kind accorded

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by Africa to the white man's presence in the art of *mbari*.

I have used the word *presence* quite a few times already. Now I want to suggest that in the colonial situation *presence* was the critical question, the crucial word. Its denial was the keynote of colonialist ideology. *Question:* Were there people there? *Answer:* Well . . . not really, you know . . . people of sorts, perhaps, but not as you and I understand the word.

From the period of the slave trade, through the Age of Colonization to the present day, the catalogue of what Africa and Africans have been said not to have or not to be is a pretty extensive list. Churchmen at some point wondered about the soul itself. Did the black man have a soul? Popes and theologians debated that for a while. Lesser attributes such as culture and religion were debated extensively by others and generally ruled out as far as Africa was concerned. African history seemed unimaginable except perhaps for a few marginal places like Ethiopia where Gibbon tells us of a short burst of activity followed from the seventh century by one thousand years in which she fell into a deep sleep, "forgetful of the world by whom she was forgot" to use his famous phrase.

With Hugh Trevor Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford in our own time, no bursts of light, no matter how brief, have ever illumined the dark sky of the Dark Continent. A habit of generosity to Africa has not grown since Gibbon's time; on the contrary it seems to have diminished. If we shift our focus from history to literature we find the same hardening of attitude.

In *The Tempest,* Caliban is not specifically African; but he is the quintessential colonial subject created by Shakespeare's genius at the very onset of Europe's Age of Expansion. To begin with, Caliban knew not his own meaning but "wouldst gabble like a thing most brutish." However, Shakespeare restores humanity to him in many ways, but especially by giving him not just speech but great poetry to speak before the play's end. Contrast this with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* three hundred years later. His Calibans make "a violent babble of uncouth sounds" and go on making it right through the novel. Generosity has not prospered.

So these African creatures have no soul, no religion, no culture, no history, no human speech, no I.Q. Any wonder then that they should be subjugated by those who are endowed with these human gifts?

A character in John Buchan's famous colonial novel, *Prester John,* has this to say:

> I knew then the meaning of the white man's duty. He has to take all the risks. . . . That is the difference between white and black, the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king, and so long as we know and practice it we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for their bellies. (Quoted in Brian Street, *The Savage in Literature* [London & Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975], 14.)

John Buchan, by the way, was a very senior colonial administrator and novelist. One suspects he knew his terrain.

So let us add to our long list of absences this last item—the absence of responsibility. If we should now draw a line under this list and add up all the absences reported from Africa, our grand total would equal one great absence of the human mind and spirit.

I am not quite certain whether all the fieldworkers who reported these absences genuinely believed their report or whether it was some kind of make-believe, the kind of alibi we might expect a man arraigned for a serious crime to put together. You see, it is significant, for example, that the moment when churchmen began to worry and doubt the existence of the black soul was the same moment when the black body was fetching high prices in the marketplace.

On the other hand these reporters may well have believed their own stories—such was the complex nature of the imperial vocation. The picture of Africa and Africans that they carried in their minds did not grow there adventitiously but was planted and watered by careful mental and educational husbandry. In an important study of this phenomenon Philip Curtin tells us that Europe's image of Africa, which began to emerge in the 1870s, was

> found in children's books, in Sunday school

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> tracts, in the popular press. Its major affirmations were the "common knowledge" of the educated classes. Thereafter, when new generations of explorers and administrators went to Africa, they went with a prior impression of what they would find. Most often, they found it. . . . (Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Actions* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964], vi.)

Conrad's famous novel *Heart of Darkness,* first published in 1899, portrays Africa as a place where the wandering European may discover that the dark impulses and unspeakable appetites he has suppressed and forgotten through ages of civilization may spring into life again in answer to Africa's free and triumphant savagery. In one striking passage in this novel Conrad reveals a very interesting aspect of the question of presence. It is the scene where a French gunboat is sitting on the water and firing rockets into the mainland. Conrad's intention, high-minded as usual, is to show the futility of Europe's action in Africa:

> Pop would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding. (Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* Norton Critical Edition [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972], 37.)

About sanity I cannot speak. But futility, good heavens no! By that crazy act of shelling the bush, France managed to acquire an empire in West and Equatorial Africa nine to ten times its own size. So whether there was method in the madness or not, there was profit quite definitely.

Conrad was giving vent to the popular conceit that Europe's devastation of Africa left no mark on the victim. Africa is presumed to pursue its dark, mysterious ways and destiny untouched by explorations and expeditions. Sometimes Africa as an anthropomorphic personage steps out of the shadows and physically annihilates the invasion—which of course adds a touch of suspense and even tragedy to Europe's enterprise. One of the best images in *Heart of Darkness* is of a boat going upstream and the forest stepping across to bar its return. Note however that it is the African forest that takes the action: the Africans themselves are absent.

I think it is interesting to contrast Conrad's episode of the French gunboat with the rendering of an analogous incident in *Ambiguous Adventure,* a powerful novel of colonization by the Muslim writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane from Senegal, a country that was colonized by the French. Conrad insists on the futility of the bombardment but also on the *absence* of human response to it. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, standing as it were at the explosive end of the trajectory, tells a different story. The words are those of one of the characters, the Most Royal Lady, a member of the Diallobe aristocracy:

> A hundred years ago our grandfather, along with all the inhabitants of this countryside, was awakened one morning by an uproar arising from the river. He took his gun and, followed by all the elite of the region, he flung himself upon the newcomers. His heart was intrepid and to him the value of liberty was greater than the value of life. Our grandfather, and the elite of the country with him, was defeated. Why? How? Only the newcomers know. We must ask them: we must go to learn from them the art of conquering without being in the right. (Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, translated by Katherine Woods [London: Heinemann, 1972], 37.)

Conrad portrays a void; Hamidou Kane celebrates a human presence and a heroic struggle.

The difference between the two stories is very clear. You might say *that* difference was the very reason African writers came into being. Their story had been told for them and they had found the telling quite unsatisfactory.

One of the earliest short stories I wrote was called "Chike's School Days," and it ended like this:

> The first sentences in his New Method Reader were simple enough and yet they filled him with a vague exultation: "Once there was a wizard. He lived in Africa. He went to China to get a lamp." Chike read it over and over again at home and then made a song of it. It was a meaningless song. "Periwinkles" got into it, and also "Damascus." But it was like a window through which he saw in

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the distance a strange, magical new world. And he was happy.

And so the young African boy enthusiastically opened his heart and mind to the exciting, wider world unfolding around him. That boy was me.

I went to a good school modeled on British public schools. I read lots of English books there. I read *Treasure Island* and *Gulliver's Travels* and *Prisoner of Zenda,* and *Oliver Twist* and *Tom Brown's School Days* and such books in their dozens. But I also encountered Ryder Haggard and John Buchan and the rest, and their "African" books.

I did not see myself as an African to begin with. I took sides with the white men against the savages. In other words I went through my first level of schooling thinking I was of the party of the white man in his hair-raising adventures and narrow escapes. The white man was good and reasonable and intelligent and courageous. The savages arrayed against him were sinister and stupid or, at the most, cunning. I hated their guts.

But a time came when I reached the appropriate age and realized that these writers had pulled a fast one on me! I was not on Marlowe's boat steaming up the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*. I was one of those strange beings jumping up and down on the river bank, making horrid faces. Or, if I insisted on the boat ride, then I had to settle perhaps for that "improved specimen," as Conrad sarcastically calls him, more absurd than a dog in a pair of breeches, trying to make out the witchcraft behind the ship's water gauge.

That was when I said no, and realized that stories are not innocent; that they can be used to put you in the wrong crowd, in the party of the man who has come to dispossess you.

And talking of dispossession, what about language itself? Does my writing in the language of my colonizer not amount to acquiescing in the ultimate dispossession? This is a big and complex matter that cannot be fully explored here. Let me simply say that when at the age of thirteen I went to that school modeled after British public schools, it was not only English literature that I encountered there. I came in contact also for the first time in my life with a large number of other boys of my own age who did not speak my Igbo language. And they were not foreigners but fellow Nigerian youth. We lived in the same dormitories, attended the same morning assembly and classes, and in the evenings gathered in the same playing fields. To be able to do all that we had to put away our different mother tongues and communicate in the language of our colonizers. This paradox was not peculiar to Nigeria. It happened in every colony where the British put diverse peoples together under one administration.

Some of my colleagues, finding this too awkward, have tried to rewrite their story into a straightforward case of oppression by presenting a happy monolingual African childhood brusquely disrupted by the imposition of a domineering foreign language. This historical fantasy demands that we throw out the English language in order to restore linguistic justice and self-respect to ourselves.

My position is that anyone who feels unable to write in English should of course follow his or her desires, but must not take liberties with our history. It is simply not true that the English forced us to learn their language. On the contrary, British colonial policy in Africa and elsewhere emphasized again and again its preference for native languages. We see remnants of that preference today in the Bantustan policies of South Africa. We chose English not because the British desired it but because having tacitly accepted the new nationalities into which colonialism had grouped us, we needed its language to transact our business, including the business of overthrowing colonialism itself in the fullness of time.

Now, that does not mean that our indigenous languages should now be neglected. It does mean that these languages must co-exist and interact with the newcomer at the present time and into the foreseeable future. For me it is not *either* English or Igbo, it is *both*. Twenty-one years ago when Christopher Okigbo, our finest poet, fell in the Biafran battlefield, I wrote for him one of the best poems I have ever written, in the Igbo language, in the form of a traditional dirge sung by young people when a member of their age group dies. Fifteen years

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ago I wrote a different kind of poem, in English, to commemorate the passing away of the Angolan poet and president, Agostinho Neto. The ability to do both is in my view a great advantage and not the disaster some of my friends insist on calling it.

It is inevitable, I believe, to see the emergence of modern African literature as a return of celebration. It is tempting to say that this literature came to put people back into Africa. But that would be wrong, because people never left Africa except in the guilty imagination of Africa's antagonists.

I must now emphasize one final point. Celebration does not mean praise or approval. Of course, praise can be part of it, but only a part. Anyone who is familiar with contemporary African writing knows how we stand in this matter; we are no flatterers of the emperor. Some years ago at an international writers' meeting in Sweden, a Swedish writer and journalist said to a small group of Africans present: "You fellows are lucky. Your governments put you in prison. Here in Sweden nobody pays any attention to us no matter what we write." We apologized profusely to him for our undeserved luck!

The running battle between the emperor and the poet in Africa is not a modern phenomenon either. Our ancestral poets, the *griots*, had their way of dealing with the problem, sometimes direct, at other times oblique.

I shall end by telling a very short Hausa tale, from Nigeria: a miniature masterpiece of the story as a two-edged sword:

> The Snake was once riding his horse curled up, as was his fashion, in the saddle. As he passed the Toad who was walking on the road, the Toad said: "Excuse me sir, but that is not how to ride a horse."
>
> "It's not?" asked the Snake. "Can you show me then how it's done?"
>
> "With pleasure," said the Toad.
>
> The Snake slid out of the saddle down the side of the horse to the ground. The Toad jumped into the saddle, sat bolt upright and galloped most elegantly up and down the road. "That's how to ride a horse," he said.
>
> "Very good," said the Snake. "Very good indeed. Please descend."
>
> The Toad jumped down and the Snake slid up the side of the horse back into the saddle and coiled himself up as before. Then, looking down at the Toad on the roadside he said: "To know is very good, but to have is better. What good can superb horsemanship do to a man without a horse?" And he rode away.

Everyone can see in that simple tale the use of story to foster the status quo in a class society. The Snake is an aristocrat who has things like horses because of who he is. The Toad is a commoner whose horsemanship, acquired no doubt through years of struggle and practice, avails nothing in this hierarchical society. The Hausa who made this story are a monarchical people, and the ethos of the story accords with the ruling values of their political system. One can imagine the emir and his court laughing boisterously at the telling of it.

But quite clearly the *griot* who fashioned that story, whether he was aware of it or not, concealed in the voluminous folds of the laughter the hint and the glint of iron. In the fullness of time that same story will stand ready to serve a revolutionary purpose using what was always there: an unattractive, incompetent, and complacent aristocracy, exposing it not to laughter this time but to severe stricture.

The new literature in Africa is aware of the possibilities available to it for celebrating humanity in our continent. It is aware also that our world interlocks more and more with the worlds of others. For, as another character in *Ambiguous Adventure* says to a Frenchman: "We have not had the same past you and ourselves, but we shall have strictly the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course."

If we accept that, and I don't see that we have much choice, then we had better learn to appreciate one another's presence and to accord to every people their due of human respect. □

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Tereza Wagner and Claude Ondobo

AFRICAN CINEMA

Stories and Images

All African wisdom is to be found in oral culture—in words, speech, symbols, and rhythm. So the highest form of artistic expression is storytelling: not merely the narrative as such, but the whole scene of storyteller and audience, with pauses and rhythm and concrete ways of representing the word. There is a strong similarity between African stories and the language of film, and it is not surprising that African cinema, born only thirty years ago, should already have produced some first-rate filmmakers and films that rank with the great classics of world cinema.

But although this cinema is important in the eyes of connoisseurs and film buffs, it is still relatively unknown to a wider audience, whether at home or abroad, since it has developed in isolation, virtually without help from the outside world, sure of its inspiration, its strength, and its rights. For this very reason, despite the crisis affecting the film world everywhere, African cinema today is indispensable, since its aesthetic, its themes, and its symbols are like an influx of new blood. African filmmaking carries within itself the seeds of a renewal of cinematographic language. Apart from the similarity between the latter and African storytelling, African civilization possesses another feature that links it with the language of film: the fact that the imaginary and the real are placed on an equal footing.

Cinema, which is the art of metaphorical representation of human situations and feelings, has a language of absolutes. It brooks no half measures and never says anything that does not signify: in this it differs from literature. this makes it an art with a close grip on reality, traditionally an art of entertainment but, besides, an area for reflection on all the social, political, and cultural problems that arise in a particular society. In Africa, modernity and tradition seem incompatible, more so than anywhere else. African cinema is striving to find a point of convergence between these two types of society. This is true, above all, of the first generation of African filmmakers. African cinema uses the tradition/modernity dichotomy to illustrate political issues as well as cultural and psychological themes.

This opposition between the modern world and the world of the ancestors is a constantly recurring theme in the works of two of the founding fathers of African cinema, Ousmane Sembène, from Senegal, who is also a novelist, and the late Oumarou Ganda, from Niger. The latter began his career as an actor with Jean Rouch, the French filmmaker and pioneer of *cinéma vérité,* a movement that had a profound influence on *cinéma d'auteur*, or the distinctively personal style of film directing, in the 1960s.

Ousmane Sembène, aware of the cultural and political role that any creative artist has a duty to assume in society, became a film director the better to attain his chosen objectives. He very quickly realized that, in Africa, films reached a wider audience than literature. His films, like his books, take a shrewd look at the past and present attitudes of the peoples of Africa. With rare courage and lucidity, this man strives through his work to denounce vacillating, cowardly, or ineffectual behavior on the part of those who are motivated by greed for profit and glory, masquerading as religious faith and respect for tradition. Conversely, women and the younger generation are bearers

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of the hope that someday a fine, strong African society will emerge.

Whereas for Sembène the two cultures, traditional and modern, must blend into a single culture, in order to eliminate both the ignorance behind a blind respect for tradition and the powerlessness that is often engendered by a false concept of modernity, Oumarou Ganda made a painful choice in favor of village life. However, he was well aware that village life cannot remain set apart from economic and cultural developments. His analysis therefore coincides to some extent with that of Ousmane Sembène.

Other pioneers of African cinema are the late Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, from Senegal, and the Ivorians Timité Bassori and Désiré Ecaré, all three trained in Paris; Ruy Guerra, from Mozambique, who worked mainly in Brazil; and the self-taught Mustapha Alassane, from Niger, to mention only the best known.

The first full-length African feature film, *La Noire de . . .* (*Black Girl*), was made in 1966 by Ousmane Sembène. Based on a minor news item, this film traces the reasons that induce a young Senegalese domestic servant, working for some former *coopérants* (French Peace Corps workers) who have settled in Antibes, to commit suicide. The film's symbolism is powerful and in some respects recalls the tragedy of the slave trade. African filmmakers are aware of the weight of their history and the disasters of submission, and until the late 1970s they used films on mythological, fictional, and documentary subjects, and also cartoons, as a means of describing all aspects of what is to be African: in everyday life (*Borom sarret—The Building Site*—a short film made in 1962 by Ousmane Sembène), in relations with the West (*F.V.V.A.*, 1972, by Mustapha Alassane), in dreams and weaknesses (*Le wazzon polygame*, a medium-length film made in 1971 by Oumarou Ganda), and in the battle for freedom (*Soleil O*, 1969, by Med Hondo).

Between 1975 and 1980, some very interesting filmmakers joined the ranks of the pioneers: the Malian Souleymane Cissé, trained, like Sembène, in the USSR; the marvelous Gaston Kaboré from Burkina Faso, trained in Paris; the Senegalese Djibil Diop, director of only one full-length feature film, *Touki-Bouki*, but one which is regarded as one of the most important products of the national film industry; Safi Faye, the first African woman to distinguish herself as a talented filmmaker; Johnson Traoré, trained in Paris; the Guinean Moussa Kemoko Diakité, trained in the Federal Republic of Germany; the Gabonese Pierre Marie Dong and Philippe Mory, both trained in France; the Congolese Sébastien Kamba, also trained in France; the Cameroonian Daniel Kamwa and the Mauritanian Med Hondo, already mentioned, both of whom came to the cinema from the theater; and, lastly, the film director, novelist, playwright, and producer, the Nigerian Ola Balogun, also trained in Paris. This second generation of filmmakers won international recognition for African cinema.

The historical film emerged in Africa in the 1980s, addressing new themes that do not necessarily stem from the modernity/tradition dichotomy. This is true, for example, of the very fine full-length films of Gaston Kaboré, including *Wend Kuuni* (*The Gift of God*, 1982) and that of Souleymane Cissé, *Yeelen* (*The Light*, 1987), which won the Jury Prize at the 1987 Cannes Festival. *Wend Kuuni* is a psychological drama that tells the story of a child who is abandoned by his family and becomes autistic. But this inner silence cannot remain impervious to the warmth of fellowship emanating from the community. *Yeelen* is a dramatic work in which a father's jealousy of his son, who is to be initiated into sacred knowledge, locks the two in mortal combat. The action of these two films unfolds in traditional societies, where the conflict between tradition and modernity is no longer used as a frame of reference.

If the historical film is proving more and more attractive to African filmmakers, it is because this type of subject affords an opportunity to describe the religious, political and social order of rural communities and to show their solidarity in the face of adversity, while drawing attention to village philosophy and ethics.

Thus Med Hondo's very beautiful *Saraaunia* (1986) or *Emitaï* (*Thunder God*, 1971) and *Ceddo* (*Outsiders*, 1977) by Ousmane Sembène, highlight the life of village communities

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in their struggles against foreign invaders, whether military as in the first two films or religious as in the third. The social order, which has been destroyed by the modern world, is particularly well portrayed in these films. In *Saïtane* (1973), by Oumarou Ganda, the harmonious balance of power collapses very swiftly when such occurrences as adultery or incest (as in *Niaye*, 1965, by Ousmane Sembène) start to influence the behavior of those who hold these powers in trust. It is nevertheless remarkable to observe that, once the drama has been worked out, the rigor of tradition restores order. In *Yeelen*, the confrontation between father and son causes natural disasters as well as serious economic and social disruption. But the story ends with a prophecy foretelling that a day will come when the Bambara will once again be a great nation.

While the themes represented in African films are for the most part universal, the unity of time, space, and rhythm found in them is resolutely a part of African culture and civilization. Time, like space, is elastic, and does not place a frame around the action. Events occur as if the eternity of the gods had dawned on Earth, and as if, despite the thousand-and-one preoccupations of everyday life, time did not matter. Just like the wide, generous open space of the African landscape, time cannot be hemmed in by man, and it takes its natural course, independent of human activities. By contrast, the rhythm of these films is beaten out by human hands. In counterpart to time and space, rhythm is provided by movement, by the most mundane gestures, or by speech, which always takes on an oracular tone. This is what makes it altogether human.

In *Lettre paysanne* (*Letter from the Country*, 1975), by Safi Faye, we watch the everyday life of the filmmaker's own village during the winter months. Work in the fields in the mornings, the mid-day meal break, as day follows day, punctuated by scenes under the palaver tree and snatches of conversation, all of which are strands imperceptibly weaving the fabric of the film. The beauty of the countryside, the peace of the natural world, the weight of time, although strongly present, do not obscure the questions of survival that the village must face, and do not deflect any of the criticism that may be aroused by traditional customs, manners, and morals.

Set against this highly political and intellectual form of cinema, there is also the commercial cinema of the English-speaking countries. The Nigerian Ola Balogun, who is probably the only African filmmaker to have directed and produced more than ten full-length feature films, has had a run of successes with works adapted from Yoruba theatre, in which marvelous stories unfold in a universe of music and dance. His output also includes works of a mythological nature, such as *The Black Goddess* (1979), or political films like *Cry Freedom* (1980), a protest against colonization. These works are, nevertheless, closer to Western cinema than those of the French-speaking African countries.

Although the wealth and complexity of African cinema cannot be denied, it is nevertheless not equipped to compete against the powerful world film industry. Two major obstacles stand in its way: technique and funding. This cinema emerged and developed virtually without support of any kind, whether financial, political, cultural, or technical. Thirty years later, the working conditions of filmmakers are still extremely precarious. Indeed, cinema came late to the African continent, at a time when "maximum technical know-how" has become necessary in order to make a film with universal appeal. *Yeelen* by Souleymane Cissé shows that, with adequate funding and techniques, a film can emerge from the ghetto in which African cinema is at present languishing. Since mainly experimental and art films are being produced, the African economic sector has not concerned itself with setting up a film industry. But the growing interest shown by international producers in this *cinéma d'auteur* will, perhaps, result in a breakthrough. □

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Biodun Jeyifo

LITERATURE IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

Repression, Resistance, and Reconfigurations

Underdevelopment, as we now know, is the presence of absence in the present, the mythical character in a debased drama named neo-colonization which fills the stage of today's events with both actors and scenery. . . . It is a mysterious force whence issue the Delphic emanations of external exploitation, the matrix from which fetishes are endlessly turned out. Every African brought into its service like Caliban by Prospero's wand is working only to accomplish its desires. Therefore, since in Africa there is no reality except through this savage fiction, the extraordinary resilience of which [Aimé] Césaire spoke and which all of us wish for can only come about through the projection over Africa—the whole of Africa—of unbridled entities which, spreading to infinity, liberate new energy.

—Stanislas Adotevi, "Negritude Is Dead: the Burial"

Historical co-ordinates don't fit any longer, new ones, where they exist, have couplings not to the rulers, but to the ruled. It is not for nothing that I chose as an epigraph for my novel July's People *a quotation from Gramsci: "The old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms."*

—Nadine Gordimer, "Living in the Interregnum"

Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

—Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

Literature has been an extraordinarily influential institution in postcolonial Africa, and African writers have been prominent in the struggles to build modern democratic societies on the ruins of the colonial state and against the brutalities of the many dictatorial post-independence regimes of the continent. (I shall be talking of literature from sub-Saharan Africa in this piece, with only passing references to writers from North Africa. This is less a matter of ideological persuasion than, alas, of professional ignorance.) A great number of African writers have had their works banned by these regimes, many have been jailed for long terms, and not a few have been killed or hounded into involuntary exile. (Among the prominent African writers who have suffered detention or been forced into exile are Mongo Beti, Breyten Breytenbach, Dennis Brutus, Nurrudin Farah, Bessie Head, Festus Iyayi, Abdelatif Laabi, Jack Mapanje, Micere Mugo, Keorapetse Kgositsile, Maina wa Kinyati, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nawal El Saadawi, and Wole Soyinka.) The South African apartheid state, Idi Amin's Uganda, Kamuzu Banda's Malawi, and Daniel arap Moi's Kenya have been the most repressive for the arts and the life of the imagination, but literature has also been embattled in the most "benevolent" or paternalistic regimes, like those of Houphet-Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire, Kenneth Kaunda's Zambia, and Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

Literature in postcolonial Africa is thus deeply political, just as it had been in colonial Africa. This calls for a careful explanation, one

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that transcends the narrow conception of the relationship of politics and literature represented in its extreme form by Stendhal's famous remark that politics in a novel is like a pistol shot in a concert hall. Certainly, the politics of literary expression in Africa includes forms like protest, agitprop, satirical sketches in street theater performances, prison notes and journals (often smuggled out while the writer is still incarcerated), pamphlets and manifestoes, all of which have been used to defy postindependence African dictatorial regimes. However, beyond these "instant" forms of political literature—which, we must never forget, often require great courage—some of the finest writings of postcolonial African literature involve a sophisticated *testamentary* tradition that taps the deepest democratic aspirations of the continent and its peoples. Surely, this connects African writing with some of this century's great literature from around the world.[1] In the most powerful of these works, the voices of postcolonial African literature mingle with those of other writers of this century who have made of literature the nemesis of state terrorism and a light in dark times, from Bertolt Brecht to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, from Primo Levi to Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

The finest of these writings belong to the great body of political literature of this century whose provenance lies in the confrontation of gifted imaginations with the most monstrous political systems of the century: European fascism, the Stalinist gulag, the mythical world of the ferocity and corruption of the Latin American military strongman, the *caudillo*. This gives us a simultaneously depressing and exhilarating dialectic: great political writing, it seems, always requires unspeakable crimes and barbarities; but at the same time, let evil be so awesome that it seems to spring from the very depths of nature and history, it will always meet, through great writing, a resistance that calls forth the spirit of all the victims of present and past crimes and injustices against humanity. Thus, to the surpassing evil of the Voerwoods and Bothas, the Idi Amins and the Mobutus, the Nguemas and the Bandas, the most powerful literary imaginations of the continent have responded with momentous works imbued with the spirit of the human will to freedom. And only an appreciation of this explains the otherwise baffling point that although so much of the greatest works of postcolonial African writing is so profoundly pessimistic, even melancholic, much of it is also, to borrow the title of one of Neruda's volumes of poetry, "fully empowered," full of verbal vigor, innovative narrative, brilliantly original forms and techniques.

A few examples might serve to illustrate this point. In Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists,* evil and genocide are on the loose, creeds, families, and nations are broken up, and even the individual psyche is penetrated and colonized by this omnipresent evil. But the play derives its *texture* from the brilliant deconstructive wit of its protagonist, the Old Man, a Sade-like genius, and his acolytes, four beggar-vagrants who have been trained to perform like vengeful itinerant circus artists out to confront humanity. Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is a literary primer on the cruelties of neocolonialism. The text, however, comprises a stunning melange of Aesopian fables, poetic songs and chants, dramatic inserts, Kikuyu proverbs and legends, savage Swiftian satirical cartoons, and incorporations of biblical materials. Bessie Head's acclaimed novel *A Question of Power* is suffused by the gloom of the writer's discovery, upon her arrival as an exile in Botswana from South Africa, that black Africans inflict on one another the kind of cruelties and degradation that whites inflict on blacks in her apartheid homeland. However, the writing moves back and forth between expressionist refraction of the protagonist's descent into schizophrenia and madness, philosophical disquisitions on gender and the institutional determinations of the moral and spiritual guidance of humanity and society, and a diary-like detailing of work on the collective self-help projects in the village in which the novel is set. In these works, and others like Marechera's *Black Sunlight,* Fugard's *The Island,* Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* and Armah's *Fragments,* thematic pessimism is leavened by the force and originality of the rendering, and this becomes in itself a metaphor of indomitable will against apartheid and the neocolonial nightmares to the north.

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I have stressed a continuity between the literature of colonial Africa, especially in its declining phase, and that of postindependence Africa, but to this I would add three qualifying observations.

First: in this essay I shall be engaging only the most significant postcolonial African writing. I shall not be concerned with some of the problems that affect the production and circulation of literary work *in* Africa, problems deriving from economic backwardness and the failures of autonomous development. Although these effects will not be explored here, some can be succinctly stated: it is much easier to obtain the works of African writers in Europe and North America than in Africa itself; and the most insightful criticism of this literature is mostly published in foreign journals and magazines.

Second: much of Africa's important writings have sprung from wars, political turmoil, and the tyranny of many of the postindependence regimes of the continent. Thus, those who might wonder at how quickly postcolonial African writing attained political and moral maturity would do well to remember that the lessons were learned in the womb of colonialism, against the negations and tyranny of colonial rule. Colonialism, in virtually all parts of Africa, did not enter its "liberal" phase until after the Second World War. And even then the battles *had* to be fought to expand the civic and human rights of Africans, to regain independence, and to exorcise dependency and inferiorization by challenging racially determined Eurocentric constructions of truth, rationality, and moral agency. Nationalist and radical social thought and literature in colonial Africa were invaluable intellectual and cultural "fronts" of these battles.

Thus the social thought of Pan-Africanists like Blyden, Casely-Hayford, Sekyi, and Diop, and revolutionary nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, and Eduardo Mondlane had literary counterparts in works like Casely-Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound,* Sekyi's *The Blinkards,* David Diop's *Hammer Blows,* Neto's *Stubborn Hope,* and Oyono's *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal.* A volume like *When Bullets Begin to Flower,* Margaret Dickinson's collection of patriotic and revolutionary Angolan anticolonial poetry, is a vivid illustration of this point, since "patriotism" in this volume is defined as much in reinventing the nation as in ending the foreign usurpation of sovereignty that colonialism represented; it is defined as much by exorcising racist, denigrating images of Africa and Africans as by drawing upon the varied poetic, rhetorical, and expressive traditions of the Angolan peoples. Hence the slogan that runs throughout the poetry in this volume as an underlying motif: *Vanos Descobir Angola!* (Let us Discover Angola!)

The third point derives logically from this complex interplay between colonialism and the postcolonial condition. Between the extremes of those who deny any relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present and those who absolutize the connection between them, there is a great variety of views. This point is crucial to perceptions of tradition and identity in African literature. Thus, those who insist that colonialism was *entirely* and unambiguously evil and injurious to African cultural traditions and creativity also take the view that postcolonial African literature should abandon Western literary influences. Among major proponents of this view are the late Ugandan poet, cultural anthropologist, and theorist Okot p'Bitek and the Nigerian critic and cultural journalist Chinweizu. The opposite view is expressed by people like the Zairean philosopher and novelist V.Y. Mudimbe and the Ghanaian philosopher and cultural critic Kwame Anthony Appiah, who hold that reassertions of literary tradition, even when they are based on precolonial sources, cannot be pure products unaffected by colonialism, but are indeed *re-inventions* overwhelmingly shaped by colonialism; correspondingly, they speak of syntheses between African forms and sources and Western influences.

In between these two positions, other commentators take more flexible, perhaps theoretically and ideologically weaker positions. Ali Mazrui, for instance, talks of a "triple heritage," which unproblematically includes precolonial African, Arab-Islamic, and Western traditions. Another view, very widely held, involves simple empiricist accounts of the chronological supersession of

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colonial Africa by postcolonial Africa, with the attendant and inevitable pains of modernization and Westernization. In African literary criticism, this view is best exemplified by the editorial texts of the important journal *African Literature Today*.

In the opinion of this writer, the most useful accounts of this relationship come from a composite group of social theorists, philosophers, writers, and cultural critics, mostly of the revolutionary or democratic left, a group that includes names like Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Samir Amin, Paulin Hountondji, Marcien Towa, Stanislas Adotevi, Chinua Achebe, Omafume Onoge, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Abiola Irele, Ousmane Sembene, Agostinho Neto, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Mahmoud Mamdani, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Bessie Head. There is within this group a great diversity of ideas about postcolonial African critical thought and literature, but I extrapolate some common themes: that colonialism profoundly affected Africa, but in complex ways that simultaneously involved both exploitation, inferiorization and condescension, and mostly, but not entirely unintended transformative, positive processes; that the aftereffects of colonialism continue to plague Africa; that modernization in Africa is part of the alienating, global modernity of the capitalist epoch; that while much of postcolonial African literature and critical thought involves the exploration of Africa's place in the world, the most important issue in African cultural politics is the relationship of Africa to itself, the encounter of African nations, societies, and peoples with one another.

All of this points to the fact that the idea of a *colonial* line of descent for postcolonial African literature is not a mere given fact of political and cultural history; it is a construct of great consequence for both the production and the reception of the literature. The postcolonial does not come merely adventitiously *after* colonialism. Complex and ambiguous historical dynamics link the two and link both to precolonial Africa. For the rest of the essay I wish to explore the most important literary manifestations of this postcolonial cultural space. For this, it is important for us to bear in mind Achebe's characteristically lucid admonition:

> It is the very nature of creativity, in its prodigious complexity and richness, that it accommodates paradoxes and ambiguities. But this, it seems, will always elude and pose a problem for the uncreative literal mind. The literal mind is the one-track mind, the simplistic mind, the mind that cannot understand that where one thing stands another will stand by it.

Consider the first epigraph at the head of this essay. There the ethnologist and philosopher Stanislas Adotevi, the author of *Negritude et Negrologues*, perhaps the most brilliant and radical critique of Senghorian Negritude, calls for the projection over all of Africa of "unbridled entities" that would "liberate new energy" by exceeding the scope set by Prospero for Caliban. Moreover, Adotevi deliberately portrays both colonialism and neocolonial dependence as witches' cauldrons from which phantasms and fictions about Africa and Africans are brewed, thus necessitating the need for counter fictions and "entities."

In Prospero and Caliban, Adotevi is alluding to perhaps the most widely deployed tropes of postcolonial literature. No pair of symbolic figures from the European literature of empire and colonization has had the same suggestiveness. The central factor in the resonance of *The Tempest* seems to have been the way that the play sees both colonial conquest and resistance to it as predicated on language—its power of establishing definitions of truth, reason, and reality and its corresponding power to disestablish and delegitimate. Prospero absorbs Caliban into the universe of his totalizing order of language, knowledge, and power; but Caliban revolts.

In contemporary African literature and criticism, much has been made of the Prospero-Caliban complex, mostly in terms of expanding Shakespeare's text and making of Caliban the "native" artist, intellectual, or critic who uses Prospero's language to revolt against Prospero and to wrest political control over the island or the colonized territory. By this reckoning,

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Caliban's revolt is successful to the extent that in appropriating Prospero's language he defamilarizes it, makes it undergo an estrangement such that Prospero can no longer recognize himself, his world, his projects, his supercilious racial and cultural pretensions in the "de-formed" language. This indeed was one of the main ideas in Jean-Paul Sartre's famous 1948 essay "Orphée Noire" in its celebration of the poetry of Negritude in the French language. This view implies that postcolonial literary expression *within* a European-based linguistic medium, within *Francophone, Anglophone,* or *Lusophone* literatures, are not so much local variants of metropolitan European literatures as new counterhegemonic *national* literatures in their own right.

This view rests on premises radically opposed to positivist accounts of language as human social practice, accounts incapable of grasping the complex alchemies that shape languages when they meet and collide. We need a comparative critical discourse that will astutely deploy Achebe's warning against literal-mindedness: "Where one thing stands, another will stand by it."

The most significant postcolonial African writing comes from this conceptual universe. And for this, the metaphor of Caliban's linguistic revolt, for all its resonance, clearly falls short of grasping the issues involved, since its implication of inversions of Prospero's language to estrange Prospero cannot admit of one thing standing where another one stands. For there are vast differences between European and African languages, and in yoking together their accumulated resources, postcolonial African writers are able to achieve transmutations impossible outside a postcolonial context. And it bears repeating that *this* context, this *space* involves the uneven coexistence of cultural forms from the precolonial, the colonial, and the postcolonial social formations.

The most accomplished postcolonial writers draw upon structures of feeling perhaps once treasured in pre-industrial European culture but long vanished from either the present-day living stock of ordinary speech or its incorporations into literary language. The examples are legion: the Ghanaian poet and novelist Kofi

Chinuă Ăchebe Rocon/Enugu, Nigeria

Awoonor draws extensively on the funeral dirges, the songs of ritual abuse and contests of the Ewe-speaking peoples, and achieves cadences otherwise unimaginable in English; Amos Tutuola's characters and narratives come from an exuberant Yoruba metaphysical universe worked over by colonial and postcolonial influences, and this gives his writings their celebrated haunting, enigmatic quality; the black South African poet Mazizi Kunene reinvents a new heroic, epic poetry in English by drawing on ancient Zulu poetic, chanted modes.

Perhaps the greatest practitioners of this quintessentially postcolonial literary practice are Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. In Soyinka's plays like *A Dance of the Forests, The Road, Madmen and Specialists,* and *Death and the King's Horseman,* autochthonous rites jostle with sensibilities produced by the contradictions of colonial capitalism or postcolonial alienation; the presiding spirit, the muse here, is not Caliban but Ogun, the ancient Yoruba god of creativity and destruction. Achebe draws on the brooding myths of the Igbo within novelistic frames that are utterly realistic and an ideational universe that is relentlessly rationalist and skeptical. Indeed, one of the most illuminating observations on postcolonial writing is provided by Achebe himself.

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> In one sense then [there] is a travelling away from its old self towards a cosmopolitan, modern identity while in another sense [there] is a journeying back to regain a threatened past and selfhood. To comprehend the dimensions of this gigantic paradox and coax from it such unparalleled inventiveness requires . . . the archaic energy, the perspective and temperament of creation myths and symbolism.

This notion of paradox and ambiguity as fundamental to the situation of postcolonial African literature finds noteworthy instantiations in two particular strands of postcolonial African writing: white South African authors who challenge apartheid and its intellectual foundations and writings by women and their challenge to the assumed normative *male* ground of postcolonial African literature. Let us turn first to the former.

If, as we have seen, the metaphor of Caliban's revolt has only limited application to postcolonial writing by *black* African writers, surely it has an even lesser application to *white* African authors, who may metaphorically be called Prospero's "African" progeny, for it is Prospero himself who is Africanized, who must now invent a new cultural identity for himself free of superciliously ethnocentric Enlightenment universalism. The limits etched here go back to Shakespeare's play: at the end of *The Tempest,* Prospero goes back to his beloved kingdom, his idealized Europe. This of course obscures the historic and cultural dynamics of *settler colonialism,* which, in a different scenario, would have Prospero stay on in the island, in the colonized African, South American, or Caribbean country. This indeed is the central plot element in Aimé Césaire's adaptation of Shakespeare's play in his *A Tempest,* a play that finds a historic limit in the founding moment of settler colonialism. Meanwhile, however, *this* form of colonization, represented in its most evil expression in the apartheid system, has run its full course and has been unraveling in the last two decades at least, undone by its indefatigable internal opponents and by the pressure of external forces.

The sense of this unraveling pervades the works of South African white authors and establishes a line of demarcation from their black compatriots within the community of apartheid's literary naysayers. This unraveling of apartheid in works by white authors is overwhelmingly marked by the sense of apocalypse but also of redemption. It is this double articulation that is conveyed in the otherwise bleak vision of Gordimer's notion of "morbid symptoms" in the second epigraph to this essay. Thus, it seems that the discourse of civilization, empire, and colonization, which had an ambiguous provenance in classic European texts like Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and Gide's *The Immoralist* has run its full course in postcolonial African literature of white South African extraction. This point is given a great variety of thematic, representational, and moral inscriptions in works like André Brink's *A Dry White Season* and *Writings in a State of Siege;* Breyten Breytenbach's *A Season in Paradise, Confessions of an Albino Terrorist,* and *In Africa, Even the Flies are Happy;* J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians, The Life and Times of Michael K,* and *Foe;* Athol Fugard's *Statements After an Arrest for the Immorality Act* and *A Lesson for Aloes;* and Nadine Gordimer's *The Late Bourgeois World, July's People,* and *The Essential Gesture.* Listen to the accents of one particular expression of this historical unraveling, in Breyten Breytenbach's *A Season in Paradise:*

> And in this night we now enter, the fires of nationalism will be fanned, will flare up even brighter and more destructive. It will be said that it is "us" or "them"—without our knowing who "us" is, without our knowing "them." That side which we are going to have to choose, is it going to be a knowing choice, or a desperate tribal choice? Will we even have a choice? The expectation will be that something will be defended. What? A Western civilization? What Western civilization, and whose? The white man's sole right to decision-making? The white skin? Only death's skin is an unblemished white. Afrikaans? Whose Afrikaans? . . . One would like to believe that it could be possible to write in this country for and about people as people. But the poison of racism flows so deeply in our veins. Even in our language, our beautiful language, our wonderful vehicle. We speak of man and woman, of boy and girl. And when these are not pale

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> enough? Kaffir, nigger, coolie, blockhead, "uncle," ayah, kwedin, maid, wog, munt. . . . Some of these terms were dropped under the pressure of growing consciousness, but will we accept the full and equal, self-evident humanness of the "others"? . . . Do we later want it said then—in this land of sunshine, there were two species of homo sapiens—man, and white man?

"Man, and white man"—even in uncovering and undermining the racist, Eurocentric roots of apartheid, patriarchal tropes contaminate Breytenbach's attempt to imagine a humanist, universalist discourse purged of its inherited ethnocentricism and bigotry. It is for this reason that many African women writers and critics—and some men—speak of a *double,* and not a single, colonization. One colonization engenders the resistance of nationalism; the other engenders a resistance that questions both colonialism and nationalism, since both are predicated on "man" as the ground and sign of all reality, imagination and creativity and "woman" as the passive complement of this male power to name and control all things and relationships.

The range of perspectives in this strand of postcolonial African literature is considerable and often follows regional and generational differences. Thus the vision of a female supersession of the double colonization of classical colonialism and nationalism seems to be simultaneously deeper *and* less separatist in the works of South African writers like Nadine Gordimer and Bessie Head than in the works of their counterparts in the north. Furthermore, older writers like Flora Nwapa of Nigeria, Grace Ogot of Kenya, and Efua Sutherland of Ghana espouse a more conservative, "traditionalist" view of women and gender relationships than writers of a second wave of postcolonial African women's writings represented by authors like Buchi Emecheta, Werewere Liking, and Tsitsi Dangarembga. However, transcending these demarcations of region, generation and ideology are the works of writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Nawal El Saadawi, Bessie Head, and Nadine Gordimer in their all-encompassing evocative power and moral authority. To give only one illustration of this, Ama Ata Aidoo's brilliant play *Anowa* uncovers the genealogies of African women's oppression in precolonial institutions, the internal slave trade, and colonial capitalism, and at the same time engages the great subjects of nationalist postcolonial African literature: foreign domination, the reinvention of tradition, the oppression of the laboring classes, the struggle for personal autonomy. The implication of works like *Anowa* is that women will no longer be marginalized by an agenda of national liberation set by unexamined patriarchal values, nor will they be ghettoized into a tolerated "women's writing" enclave.

Some aspects of contemporary Western critical thought and literary theory, stemming from Lyotard and others, makes a distinction between two forms of knowledge: on the one hand, "stories" and "narratives," and on the other hand, scientific abstraction. This follows a putative global division of knowledge production: the non-Western, peripherally capitalist nations and societies have "story" and "narrative"; the Western, developed societies have "science." This seems to be supported by trends in world literature whereby the most

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exciting and vigorous forms of writing are emerging from the developing world. For instance, of the last six Nobel laureates in literature, three have come from Africa: Wole Soyinka (1986), Naguib Mahfouz (1988), and Nadine Gordimer (1991). And this year's winner of the Booker prize, Britain's most prestigious literary award, is the young Nigerian novelist Ben Okri. This view of contemporary world literature and intellectual relations, however, has a twist that has been brilliantly articulated by, among others, Fredric Jameson:

> What this formulation does very sharply achieve . . . is the radical differentiation between the consumption of the past in narrative and its storage, hoarding and capitalization in "science" and scientific thought: a mode of understanding that, like the first surplus on the economic level, will little by little determine a whole range of ever more complex and extensive institutional objectifications—first in writing; then libraries, universities, museums; with the breakthrough in our own period to microstorage, computerized data, and data banks of unimaginable proportions, whose control or even ownership is . . . one of the crucial *political* issues of our own time.

The vitality of the literary arts in postcolonial Africa seems pertinent here. The narrative arts, the cultural value of telling a good story and of reclaiming a threatened past through fictions all remain relatively unchallenged in Africa and the developing world by the technological and social revolutions of knowledge production and consumption that are decisive phenomena of the cultural scene in the developed world. This is an enormous cultural asset, and it does underscore the vitality and growth of African writing against so much that is dismal in the continent at the present time. But as the third epigraph to this essay from Walter Benjamin warns us, we must beware "an enemy who has never ceased to be victorious." Against this grim but realistic pessimism, the long, historic, and optimistic view is that the world will never lose the desire for "story" and "narrative"; and the present systemic and institutional divisions of knowledge production that consign "story" to the South and "science" to the North are not immutable. □

NOTE

[1] From a long list of works that, although they share a common vision of human possibilities stunted but ultimately unquenchable, exhibit a great diversity of styles and technical resources, the following texts stand out: Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and the book of essays *Hopes and Impediments;* Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments;* Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa;* Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* and *Scarlet Song;* Breyten Breytenbach's *A Season in Paradise;* J.M. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K* and *Waiting for the Barbarians;* Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena, Sizwe Bansi Is Dead,* and *The Island;* Nadine Gordimer's *July People, The Late Bourgeois World,* and the book of essays *The Essential Gesture;* Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru;* Ahmadou Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence;* Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger* and *Black Sunlight;* Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood, The Barrel of a Pen,* and *Matigari;* Niyi Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth;* Femi Osofisan's *Another Raft* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels;* Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile;* Ousmane Sembene's *Xala* and *The Last of the Empire;* Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died, A Play of Giants, A Shuttle in the Crypt,* and *Madmen and Specialists.*

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Martin Kilson

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND AFRICA

A Critical Nexus

All American ethnic groups—Irish, Jews, Italians, Poles, blacks, and so on—have struggled in a rather schizophrenic way with their self-image or identity. Any group's ethnic identity within American society is carved out of a delicate, tension-laced mixture of its origin in one or another nationality, while adjusting to the American realities it had to adopt. As members of American ethnic groups went about defining themselves within a pluralistic American society (since the 1840s, say), they were inevitably pulled backward through a past left behind (linguistic, religious, marital, ideological) and forward through adjusting to American ways. This schizophrenic dialectic of ethnic group identity—between what we were and what we will become—is a fundamental component of the Americanization process.

The tension and trauma surrounding this schizophrenic dialectic vary from group to group. In general, ethnic groups from Europe's northern tier, notably the Protestant segment—such as the Dutch, Scots, Welsh, Scandinavians, Germans—experienced a low-to-moderate level of trauma in their quest for an American identity. On the other hand, groups from Europe's southern tier and from the Catholic segment of the northern tier—such as Italians, Irish, and German Catholics—experienced a high level of tension.

Furthermore, there was even more tension surrounding the status of two ethnic groups in particular—Jewish Americans and black Americans. The ancient and deep religious fissure between Jews and Christians accompanied Jewish immigrants to America and, as Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab vividly demonstrate in *Politics of Unreason: Rightwing Extremism in America 1790–1970,* anti-Semitism was a far more vicious and fierce way of marginalizing immigrant groups within American life than was anti-Catholicism. Thus, unlike other white ethnic groups, Jewish Americans invested far more emotional and cultural energy in looking outside American society for a possible external haven or zion, just in case they were unable to achieve stable inclusion into an American identity and status.

After gaining citizenship status following the Civil War, black Americans encountered an even more vicious and restrictive marginalization within American life than Jewish Americans. This caused blacks to reach for an ethnic identity that, as with Jews, looked outside of American society. This black American tilt toward Africa was essentially twofold: (1) in one of its forms, it sought a possible external haven or zion; and (2) in other forms—the dominant response in fact—it sought to borrow from African realities (past and present) sources of emotional, ideological, and cultural reinforcement of black American identity. Thus, regarding black Americans' "external haven" vision of Africa, we need only refer to the massive activity from the 1920s through the 1930s associated with the Garvey Movement (Universal Negro Improvement Association), which was popularly called the "Back-to-Africa Movement." As regards blacks' "cultural reinforcement" with their African heritage, we need only mention black Americans' perennial search for an ethnically satisfying group name—a search ranging from "Colored American" (during the nineteenth century), to "Afro-American" and "Negro American" (between the World Wars), to "Black American"

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(during the 1960s and 1970s), to the current term around which there's a broad consensus among blacks—"African American."

There has also been an ambivalent element associated with the black American interface with African realities. But this ambivalence has not been on the order of intensity recently described by a neoconservative analyst, Martin Staniland, who remarked:

> At least until the late fifties, Afro-American periodicals often reflected both a low level of interest in Africa and a rather disdainful attitude toward its inhabitants. Such distancing of African-Americans from Africa can be traced back . . . to the nineteenth century. . . . African-Americans seemed to want to turn their backs on the continent and anything that associated them with it. *(American Intellectuals and African Nationalists, 1955–1970.)*

This statement grossly and mischievously overstates the ambivalence that can be found at some periods in the black American interface with Africa. Indeed, all Staniland offers to support his observation is anecdotal documentation drawn mainly from travel articles published in black American magazines like *Ebony* and the *Negro Digest*. Any serious search through the writings of the black American intelligentsia regarding the African nexus will uncover a very different perspective, albeit alongside the kind of negativity Staniland finds typical. What emerges is more fascinating and complex—evidence of genuine intellectual and emotional endeavors to refurbish their Africanness. In fact, a more valid criticism of the long history of the black American interface with African realities is not that it involved a major tendency by black Americans to defame this heritage but rather that it involved a dysfunctional tendency to emotionally and ideologically exaggerate the African heritage, mystifying the African heritage into a fetish of re-Africanization.

From Re-Africanization to Lobbying

The re-Africanization motif has no doubt been a prominent feature of black Americans' interface with Africa. But when viewed over a period of a century of the black American/African nexus, the re-Africanization fetish has been more ideologically flamboyant than institutionally or politically viable. Although sparked by the Garvey Movement, its appeal, for various reasons, had attenuated significantly by the end of World War II.

Black Americans entered the postwar era expecting some basic progress toward the desegregation of American society, and indeed some progress did occur, though nowhere near expectations. So, during a period of disenchantment, beginning in the late 1950s, there emerged two assertive political tendencies among black Americans. One tendency sought to activate the black civil rights movement (for example, Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Council), and the other tendency sought to galvanize a new version of the re-Africanization fetish, with Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam emerging as seminal black political forces. While the Black Muslim ideological message didn't follow the Garvey Movement in explicitly calling for an organized transfer of black Americans to Africa, it did follow the Garvey Movement's emphasis on re-Africanizing blacks' cultural patterns within American society. And this internal re-Africanization, as it were, had a wholly new twist—the exchange of a deep-rooted Christian faith for Islamic faith.

In terms of gaining a formal membership following among black Americans, the Black Muslims' re-Africanization appeal did not muster members much beyond a hundred thousand (as compared to the membership of mainstream black civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, about five million). But the Black Muslims did have a significant informal influence and following, especially among that sector of black intellectuals who preferred a radical anti-white stance toward the expanding African decolonization movements. These militant black American intellectuals founded several magazines during the early 1960s that supported African decolonization movements—magazines like *Liberator* and *Freedomways*. They were also frequently involved in public demonstrations, such as the boisterous disruption of the United Nations General Assembly discussion of the Congo crisis and the murder of former Premier Patrice

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Lumumba in the summer of 1961. One of the militant black intellectuals who was influenced by the Black Muslims in this period remarked that Lumumba's death was the equivalent of "the international lynching of a black man on the altar of colonialism and racist supremacy."

However, the black ethnocentric element was only one sector among intellectuals concerned with African developments from the late 1950s onward. Nor were they the main body of black American intellectuals involved in African events either, as erroneously suggested by Staniland. Staniland presents a very skewed history of the activity of black American intellectuals in the 1950s-1970s era with respect to African developments—an account that highlights certain militant ethnocentric figures, among them John Henrik Clarke, William Strickland, Shirley Graham, Dan Watts, and their organs—*Liberator* (edited by Watts) and *Freedomways* (of which Clarke was a board member). Staniland's tendentious book argues that the American conservative perspective on African decolonization was hard-nosed and skeptical (it was, in practice, opposed to decolonization), while the liberal/leftist perspective was soft-headed and romantic.

But the black nationalist or ethnocentric element was only one part of a much broader and more differentiated black American intellectual view of African decolonization. Nowhere in Staniland's book can one find the names of Horace Mann Bond, John Aubrey Davis, Mercer Cook, Samuel Allen, William Fontaine, St. Clair Drake, Horace Clayton, Adelaide Hill, or Richard Wright, or the names of the American Society of African Culture and the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa. These individuals and organizations made up the pragmatic activist sector of black intellectuals and were, in fact, *at the very center of Black American activity relating to anticolonial and pro-African nationalist developments from the 1950s onward*. The activity of those I call pragmatic activists was much more institutionally articulated than that of the black American intellectuals whom Staniland curiously treats as prototypical. Above all, it was the pragmatic activist, not the black ethnocentric, who fashioned professional foreign policy lobbying in American politics on behalf of emerging African states and elites.

Structuring Trans-Black Linkages

The years 1956 through 1958 and beyond saw the start of a rather extensive institutional elaboration of linkages among black elites on the American and African sides of the Atlantic Ocean. There was actually a precursor organization, the Council on African Affairs—organized in the late 1930s by a black YMCA activist who had run a YMCA for Africans in South Africa (Max Yergen)—whose executive members came from the mainstream black American intelligentsia: W.E.B. DuBois, Adam Clayton Powell, Ralph Bunche (then a professor at Howard University), Paul Robeson, and Mordecai Johnson (the first black president of Howard University). But the Council on African Affairs, whose leaders moved to the far left in the postwar era, was mortally wounded by the antileftist hysteria of the time. The first drive for politically consequential trans-black organizations thus began in the late 1950s.

The initiative emanated from the francophone section of the emerging African states and elites (and French West Indian elites, too) who organized *La Société Africaine de Culture* (Society of African Culture) and from the editors of its major organ, *Présence Africaine*. Leading figures included major francophone black intellectuals: Leopold Senghor (poet and leading Senegalese politician), Alioune Diop (writer and Senegalese businessman), Aimé Césaire (Martinique poet), Frantz Fanon (Martinique psychiatrist), Louis Achille (Antilles writer), Rene Despestre (Madagascar writer), among others. A few leading anglophone African intellectuals were also a part of *La Société Africaine de Culture* and of *Présence Africaine* in the 1950s, especially Davidson Nicol (biochemist and writer from Sierra Leone), S.O. Biobaku (Nigerian historian), and Kofi A. Busia (anthropologist and nationalist politician from Ghana).

La Société Africaine de Culture organized the First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists in September 1956, to which a formal United States delegation was invited. In addition to Richard Wright (already resident in

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France since the late 1940s and a founding figure in *Présence Africaine*), the black American delegation was led by two brilliant scholars—John Aubrey Davis (political science professor at Lincoln University from the 1930s to the 1950s and afterward at CUNY), and Horace Mann Bond (sociologist and educator who was president of Lincoln University in the 1950s). Other members of the black American delegation were William Fontaine (professor of philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania), James W. Ivy (writer and editor of the NAACP's journal the *Crisis*), and Mercer Cook (professor of romance languages and literature at Howard University, who had close ties to Senghor, Césaire, and other francophone black intellectuals going back to the 1930s).

Each American delegate gave a paper at the 1956 conference. John Davis described the political status of blacks in American society; Mercer Cook discussed the views of postwar French travelers to America in regard to race relations; William Fontaine spoke on the ethics of segregation in American life; James Ivy analyzed the NAACP's pragmatic activist approach to equality for black Americans; and Horace Mann Bond described some transatlantic ties between black Americans and Africans (for example, African students attending black American colleges since the late nineteenth century) that had an impact on West African nationalist movements. Richard Wright delivered a keynote paper, a brilliant analysis of the interplay of modernity and tradition in emerging African states, arguing that inasmuch as modernity—to which he said he was deeply committed—enhanced human and individual freedom, it was the obligation of emergent African elites to ensure modernity's victory over the antifreedom aspects of African traditionalisms while respecting traditionalisms' own cultural forms. As Wright put it: "The problem is freedom. How can Asians and Africans be free of their stultifying traditions and customs and become industrialized [modernized], and powerful, if you like, like the West. . .?" Wright's formulations were prophetic for, by the middle 1960s, rather soon after decolonization, African elites and states quickly took on authoritarian forms. Wright, moreover, did not oppose modern African authoritarian patterns. Rather, he insisted that these patterns be viewed as temporary, and especially that they be used to protect the *societal* freedom created by modernity from what Wright called "stultifying [African] traditions and customs."

According to Janet Vaillant's perceptive biography of Senghor—*Black, French and African: A Life of Leopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990)—the 1956 conference had a major impact on political events in francophone Africa. The conference speeded up the time schedule of decolonization in francophone Africa through its influence on Senghor. Upon his return to francophone Africa, Senghor promoted a more aggressive perspective on decolonization. Given his special intellectual authority with other francophone nationalist leaders, he altered their moderate decolonization time schedule.

Another important political outcome of the 1956 conference was the creation of an American branch of *La Société Africaine de Culture*, which was headquartered in New York City—the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC). The American delegates to the first World Congress of Black Writers and Artists constituted AMSAC's inner circle of leaders, with John Davis assuming the executive operating post, and Horace Mann Bond the post of president. The very chartering of AMSAC by the cream of francophone African leadership endowed it with an enormous authority among the black American intelligentsia, and this authority was reinforced within a year of AMSAC's formation when its leaders were invited to the Second World Congress of Black Writers and Artists, held in Rome in March 1959. In addition to the members of the 1956 American delegation, the delegation to the 1959 Congress included Robert Carter (legal counsel of the NAACP), St. Clair Drake (anthropologist and professor at Roosevelt University), Saunders Redding (novelist and professor at Hampton Institute), and Samuel Allen (poet and professor of law at Texas Southern University).

Throughout the 1960s AMSAC functioned

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as the premier institutional mechanism that (1) spread African-related information among the black intelligentsia, (2) established close relations between the black American intelligentsia and the Africans who had come to power, and (3) edged toward a viable black American lobbying capability on African issues. As a recent historian of the black intelligentsia's ties with Africa has put it: "AMSAC brought important African leaders to the United States, held regular conferences on African issues, and published a leading journal—*African Forum*." AMSAC also stimulated African-related developments beyond its own sphere, such as encouraging civil rights organizations to direct their own lobbying activity around African issues, which they did in the early 1960s through the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, headquartered in Washington.

Indeed, from 1960 onward AMSAC's role as black America's bridge to African realities had a kind of "multiplier effect" on the black intelligentsia. For instance, it was through AMSAC's activities that a leading black clergyman, Rev. James Robinson, was encouraged to launch a student-based volunteer foreign-aid organization called Operation Crossroads Africa, which became a prototype for the Kennedy Administration's Peace Corps program, sending students to Africa and other developing countries as teachers and rural builders. And in the early 1970s there emerged another black-American initiated spinoff from AMSAC's presence—the founding of Africare by Payne Lucas, a black former Peace Corps official. Africare focuses on aiding African countries suffering food shortages caused by droughts. Unlike other American organizations working in this area, Africare makes a special effort to mobilize black American institutions (churches especially) to provide money and assistance in kind. According to one observer of Africare, "Lucas began [his] relief effort centered in the black community. He tapped ordinary black Americans in a way they had not been solicited for an Africa-related cause since the days of Garvey. From all over the country, contributions to help African famine victims poured into Africare's headquarters in Washington." Africare continues to function to this day.

The Link to Power

Perhaps the most durable institutional spinoff from AMSAC relating to African development was its direct and indirect influence on the recruitment by the United States government of a sizable cadre of black American foreign policy officials and technicians who held posts in African states, and eventually elsewhere, too. John Davis had been a consultant to U.S. agencies involved in Africa during the 1950s, as was another leading AMSAC figure, Mercer Cook, who also spent some time as the American cultural attaché in the black-ruled state of Haiti. With the liberal Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s—administrations that for the first time placed federal authority behind the final reversal of legalized segregation—the recruitment of a cadre of black foreign policy officials became possible. Many of these officials were posted in African states: Mercer Cook (first U.S. Ambassador to Senegal), Franklin Williams (NAACP legal counsel who was the second U.S. Ambassador to Ghana), Walter Carrington (civil rights lawyer who was the first black American Peace Corps director in an African state), Clyde Ferguson (international lawyer, Dean of Howard University Law School, who was the third U.S. Ambassador to Uganda), and William T. LeMelle (a Ford Foundation official who was the first U.S. Ambassador to Kenya), among many others.

There was also the emergence of a black-American cadre of elected federal officials who honed their policy skills in relating to African developments. By the early 1970s there were fifteen congressional representatives among the six thousand elected black officials nationally, and several of these had attained enough seniority to head crucial foreign policy committees. One such was Representative Charles Diggs (D-Michigan), who organized the Congressional Black Caucus. In 1972 he became chairman of the House Subcommittee on African Affairs. From this position Diggs sparked black civil rights organizations and the black intelligentsia generally to push aggres-

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sively for the elimination of white governance throughout Portuguese Africa and especially in the Republic of South Africa. By 1976 Diggs found a way to institutionalize this goal. As Walter Carrington described this development:

> On the eve of the 1976 presidential election, Diggs convened the National Black Leadership Conference on Southern Africa during the Congressional Black Caucus's annual leadership weekend in September. The conference issued *The Africa-American Manifesto on Southern Africa,* which called for the formation of a black lobby. Representatives of the assembled organizations [churches, businesses, professional associations, fraternities and sororities] pledged their financial support. Under the leadership of Randall Robinson, a former staff aide to Diggs who had organized student demonstrations on behalf of sanctions [against South Africa] while at Harvard Law School, TransAfrica opened its doors in 1978. ("Black America and African Liberation," *Focus*, 72.)

Thus, through the formation of a Black American foreign policy cadre, the rise of black federal policy makers in Congress (legislators and technical staff), and the formation of a Southern Africa-focused lobbying agency—TransAfrica—by the late 1970s, a broad range of mechanisms functioned on behalf of African developments. Initially derived from AMSAC's presence, these persisted after AMSAC closed its doors at the end of the 1960s. While this global lobbying capability has not generated a high level of foreign policy achievements relating to Africa (comparable, say, to benefits the Jewish lobby generates for Israel), some significant policy gains have nonetheless been achieved. And these gains have, in turn, had a kind of feedback effect, stimulating black leadership toward new African-related foreign policy initiatives.

The experience of Randall Robinson's Trans Africa reflected this metamorphosis. During its first year TransAfrica engineered a masterful lobbying drive that convinced Congress to sustain sanctions against South Africa. And this success, in its turn, aided the efforts of Andrew Young—the cabinet-level U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations—and his skillful deputy, Donald McHenry, to launch intricate diplomatic maneuvers that kept South Africa at the negotiating table regarding the independence of Namibia. Ambassador Young and his deputy McHenry passed on to the Reagan administration a strong negotiating legacy regarding the Namibian crisis. Even during the conservative Reagan administration—which did not continue the Carter administration's outreach to the black foreign policy lobby—TransAfrica and its allies in Congress had stored up enough long-run political credit to enact, in 1986, legislation (the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act) that broadened and toughened earlier sanctions against South Africa, tying sanctions to concrete steps toward full-fledged democratization in that country.

Thus it is clear that since the middle 1970s the formative black-American–African leadership ties that Bond, Davis, Cook, Drake, Ivy, and others forged through AMSAC in the 1960s had reached the "takeoff" stage, spawning a variety of initiatives crucial to African policy advances. Since the 1980s, with the expanding professional skills and leverage of the black middle class, this takeoff stage has been consolidated. There is now a network of black American policy makers, foreign-policy bureaucrats, professional lobbyists, social science analysts, and private-sector professionals (business, law, finance, and so on) professionally concerned with African affairs.

The most recent consequential foreign-policy event associated with this new foreign-policy infrastructure occurred in April 1991, at the "African–African-American Policy Summit" that convened in Abijan under the sponsorship of Côte d'Ivoire President Felix Houphouet-Boigny. The initiator and main organizing figure of this conference was Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, the civil rights leader and Philadelphia clergyman who was the architect of the "Sullivan Principles" (1977) that required American corporations operating in South Africa to structure working conditions and wages of Africans more favorably than required by South Africa's racist labor policies. An unprecedented event—dwarfing previous conferences—it was attended by the governing classes of some twenty-four African states

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(heads of state, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, experts from international agencies, and so on), over fifteen hundred African delegates. They were joined by a three-hundred-member black-American delegation—major federal officials; experts from international agencies; African policy experts; businesspeople and financial professionals concerned with Africa; lobbyists; and civil rights figures.

Three crucial policy proposals were generated by the 1991 Summit: (1) the setting up of black-American–African business ventures and an International Bank of Africa to fund such ventures; (2) dual citizenship status for black Americans in the twenty-four African states at the summit; and (3) a major lobbying endeavor by black-American intelligentsia to have the massive sub-Saharan African debt forgiven. The remainder of the policy proposals from the summit concerned the massive expansion of educational ties between black Americans and the still fledgling educational systems in African states, with the purpose of reducing Africa's large illiterate population. Striking a tone of strategic realism, a leading member of the black-American delegation, Niara Suderkasa, president of Lincoln University, offered the following observation: "The development effort envisioned by the summit will require commitments of billions of dollars. Not all of it can or should come from the black community. In order to induce the U.S. public and private sectors to increase investment in sub-Saharan Africa, the African-American community must develop strategies to leverage its buying power and voting power."

Conclusion: Dilemmas of Trans-National Ethnicity

As American ethnic groups gain social mobility and move from the margins of society—where they were once denigrated as "Micks," "Wops," "Kikes," "Niggers," "Chinks," and so on—to the center of influence, they typically project their new influence upon the stage of world politics. Black Americans are just the most recent ethnic group to successfully participate in this metamorphosis, following on the heels of groups like Irish Americans, Polish Americans, Armenian Americans, Jewish Americans, and others who have successfully leveraged their clout into a beneficial foreign policy impact on their "ethnic homeland" societies: Ireland, Poland, Armenia, Israel, and so on.

But American ethnic groups involved in trans-nationalizing their ethnic clout have not always done so in a humanistic or morally sensitive way. That is, they have too often ignored the negative impact their trans-national actions have on social and cultural divisions in their "ethnic homelands." Nor have they responded adequately to human rights violations and sectarian violence perpetuated by the ruling elites in these "homelands." Thus, we find Greek Americans exacerbating social fissures in Cyprus. The thousands of lives that IRA arms have snuffed out in Northern Ireland have not generated a serious movement among Irish Americans for a negotiated peace to the Irish crisis, though a handful of courageous Irish-American figures (notably Senators Daniel Moynihan and Edward Kennedy) have publicly condemned IRA terrorism. Nor has Israel's heavy-handed governance of the West Bank sparked among Jewish Americans a serious thrust for a negotiated peace, though a growing number of Jewish-American intellectuals have publicly insisted on a Palestinian state solution to the Israel-Arab conflict.

Much like white ethnic groups new to power in foreign affairs, the evolution among black Americans of trans-national clout has not been characterized by a special sensitivity to dysfunctional social and political patterns in the "ethnic-homeland" society. The roots of this difficulty among the Black intelligentsia are long-standing, first emerging in regard to the modern world's oldest independent black states—Ethiopia, Liberia, and Haiti. Since the appearance of the black-American intelligentsia in the early twentieth century, what I would call the "quality-of-power issue" in black-ruled states has been ignored. They ignored it because of their primary concern with destroying white supremacist governments—a concern that, in fact, gave a special elevated status to Liberia, Haiti, and Ethiopia precisely because they were black- (not white-) ruled societies. So for black-American intellectuals (and Carib-

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bean radical intellectuals like C.L.R. James and Eric Williams) *the fact of black rule* always preempted *the quality of black rule*.

Thus, *the fact of black rule* remained primary for black American intellectuals as they became colleagues of African elites through *La Société Africaine de Culture*. So, the *fact-of-black-rule* perspective is found dominating a discussion of the origins and development of the Haitian Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century in an article by a black American sociologist in *Présence Africaine* (June-July 1958, Adelaide Hill, "Revolution in Haiti, 1791–1920"). It is fascinating that nowhere in her article does Professor Hill ever treat the Haitian power structure evaluatively—that is, dissect the most fundamental attribute of the new black powerholders following the Haitian Revolution; namely, that these powerholders established full-fledged authoritarian regimes over Haiti's agrarian black masses. These regimes continued without significant liberalization throughout the twentieth century, free of criticism from the black American intelligentsia, until the recent democratic election of Aristide (which, alas, anti-democratic forces have undone, with Aristide—at this writing—outside Haiti, while "negotiations" for his return proceed slowly).

So too have the authoritarian practices of independent African states benefited from black-American intellectuals' dilemma of lauding *the fact of black rule* while slighting *the quality of black rule*. Perhaps the worst case scenario regarding this dilemma occurred during the middle 1970s when the black intelligentsia (press, scholars, civil rights leaders, and so on) remained pathetically mute in the face of the barbarous rule of General Idi Amin in Uganda—a rule of such cruelty that Amnesty International estimated that there were over two hundred thousand political murders in the years 1972 through 1979. Even the leading black representative dealing with African affairs—Congressman Charles Diggs—found it difficult to face up to the Amin regime's cruelty. When Congress in 1977 finally got around to discussing the regime's cruelty Diggs opposed the discussion because of his "concern that a congressional investigation of Uganda might divert public attention from human rights conditions in [white-ruled] South Africa."

This reluctance of Diggs and the pragmatic activist sector of the black-American intelligentsia to face up to the "quality-of-black-rule" issue was a moral limitation shared with the ethnocentric sector of black intellectuals. Otherwise, the differences between the ethnocentrists and pragmatists were quite basic. When the post–World War II generation of black ethnocentric or nationalist intellectuals began to articulate interest in emerging African states and elites during the early 1960s, they attacked the pragmatic activist black intellectuals associated with AMSAC who actually blazed the trail of viable linkage with emerging African elites. The attacks by the black ethnocentrist intellectuals (for example, Harold Cruse, John Henrik Clarke, Shirley Graham, and others) mainly focused on the ideological or political credentials of the pragmatic activist intellectuals, suggesting they were suspect because of what Harold Cruse characterized as "the assimilation tendencies in the outlook of [mainstream] Afro-American intellectuals, artists, writers . . . [who resist] a cultural rehabilitation and refurbishing of [their] entire racial outlook." In short, Cruse and other black nationalists disliked the mainstream pragmatists because they weren't Garveyites and weren't anti-white enough.

Be this as it may, in regard to forging viable African linkages, the black ethnocentrist intellectuals have established neither effective lobbying organizations nor institutions for transferring developmental resources to African societies. This kind of developmental linkage was to be AMSAC's legacy alone. The black nationalist or ethnocentrist legacy has been exclusively of the "expressive" or "emotive" kind, trumpeted during the 1970s and 1980s in ethnocentrist-oriented magazines like the *Black Scholar* and the *Black World* (now defunct). Currently, the "emotive" legacy is prominent in the form of the Afrocentric Movement led by Molefi Asante, a linguistic scholar at Temple University, which has had some impact through Africanizing the curriculum for schools serving

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lower-class, inner-city children (particularly males).

There is, however, a fundamental flaw at the core of the Afrocentric orientation toward the black-American–African nexus. The flaw is that the Afrocentric mindset among some black intellectuals assumes that there is a generic kinship bond among peoples of Negro ancestry in general and between black Americans and Africans in particular. But anthropological studies on human societies just do not support this assumption, for kinship bonds must be carefully nurtured and worked at in order to produce positive humanistic outcomes among human groups (whether they be tribal groups, racial groups, national-language groups, whatever). The naiveté of the Afrocentric notion of generic kinship bonds becomes apparent when it comes face-to-face with hard historical and structural realities, such as the voluntary role of African ritual and leadership groups in sustaining the .infrastructure of the slave trade (in exchange for European currencies, manufactured goods, guns, and so on) for a couple of hundred years. And we can add the many contemporary violations of supposed black generic kinship bonds like the fratricidal civil war among feuding clans and lineages in Somali or among northern and southern ethnic groups in the Sudan.

Richard Wright keenly understood these kinds of twisted human contradictions in regard to so-called generic kinship bonds when he criticized Leopold Senghor's negritude mode of romanticizing black kinship bonds during the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1956. Wright informed Senghor:

> Brother . . . I have got to face it. I cannot accept Africa because of mere blackness or on trust. . . . The ancestor cult religion with all of its manifold, poetic richness that created a sense of [African] self-sufficiency—did not that religion, when the European guns came in act as a sort of aid to those guns? Did that religion help the people to resist fiercely and hardily and hurl the Europeans out? . . . I have the feeling, uneasy, almost bordering upon dread, that there was a fateful historic complement between a militant white [slaving] Christian Europe and an ancestral cult religion in Africa. They complemented each other and this morally foul relationship remained for more than five hundred years. (*Présence-Africaine*, June-September 1957.)

And despite the enormous achievement for nearly forty years of forging viable and mutually beneficial linkages between black-American and African elites, we today in the black-American intelligentsia must still follow Richard Wright's courageous lead in insisting not on a romantic negritude-type or the current Afrocentric-type interface with Africa but on a pragmatic nexus. After all, we still find materialistically inspired contradictions in the interaction of black Americans and Africans, such as the extensive role of Nigerians in smuggling South Asian heroin into black-American inner-city communities—communities already saturated with many thousands of poor black households ravaged by drug abuse. This rudely contradicts the romantic Afrocentric notion of black kinship bonds, contradictions that black intellectuals who propagate the Afrocentric perspective must eventually confront.

The 1980s witnessed a slow but steady evolution of the black intelligentsia's perspective on the "quality-of-rule issue." TransAfrica led the way in this metamorphosis, for by 1985 it increasingly published criticisms of authoritarian practices in the worst African states such as Zaire and Central African Republic. More recently TransAfrica has put the whole issue of authoritarian rule and human rights at the top of its policy agenda. It has become a major lobbying group in trying to get the United States foreign-policy power structure—governmental and private—behind the budding redemocratization processes in African states. It is hoped that this human rights consciousness will spread among the black intelligentsia. For as it spreads it might very well have a positive feedback on our country's own still shallow human rights consciousness—shallow especially in the past decade or more of conservative Republican governments that have cynically closed their eyes to the massive crisis of poverty in American life, particularly in the African-American sector of our society. □

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Adam Ashforth

SOUTH AFRICA: RECONSTRUCTING AN IMPERIAL STATE

Facing a Hazardous Future

It now seems highly likely that within the near future, some say within the coming year, a new constitution will be inaugurated in South Africa. For any new constitution to gain a semblance of legitimacy either locally or internationally, it will have to look something like a liberal democracy with social welfare ambitions: majority rule within a unified state. There should also be some system built into the constitution for preservation of "minority" rights, perhaps through geographical representation of communities, although there will not be any language in the document that recalls the "group rights" of apartheid. There will probably also be some system of strengthened regional government. Basic property rights of market capitalism will, in all likelihood, be sanctified as well.

In this same not-too-distant time, shortly after the ceremonies celebrating the inaugural government of the New South Africa, two events laden with historical irony will occur. A black South African president, probably Nelson Mandela, and his Minister for Police will order a predominantly Afrikaner security force to suppress radical Afrikaner nationalists. At about the same time, or shortly thereafter, the same leadership will order a crackdown on militant Africanist groups.

Similar circumstances arose in the early years of the Union of South Africa, when the Boer leaders called upon their former enemies the Imperial British troops to help suppress brother Afrikaner strikers and rebels. In the 1990s suppression of the diehard Boers and Africanist revolutionaries is more or less inevitable, and may even suit the new regime as a way of demonstrating evenhandedness and statesmanship. More problematic for the new regime, however, will be repressing Zulu nationalism and the township youth. And more generally troubling will be the routine coercion brought to bear upon unauthorized "squatters" and illegal immigrants.

Zulu nationalism is, and will continue to be, a powerful political force in southern Africa. Most discussions of the extent of support, or lack of it, for the Inkatha Freedom party of Zulu chief Gatsha Buthelezi miss the point that in Zululand (and I use the colonial denotation advisedly) there are all the seeds of a powerful and divisive nationalism. It may not be a monolithic political ideology even within the rural areas of Natal where the Zulu kingdom has its heartland, but the Zulu nation is composed of many thousands of people who are prepared to die in its name. That this may not seem particularly rational to people who do not share such commitments is beside the point.

It is important to note that however much ideas about Zulu identity may be contested, there is a powerful commitment to nationhood among many Zulu-speaking people, which in a fundamental sense is culturally prior to the political representations of that nation in the Inkatha Freedom party. Zulu nationalism does not reduce to the Inkatha Freedom party, especially now that that group is so compromised by revelations of secret funding by the

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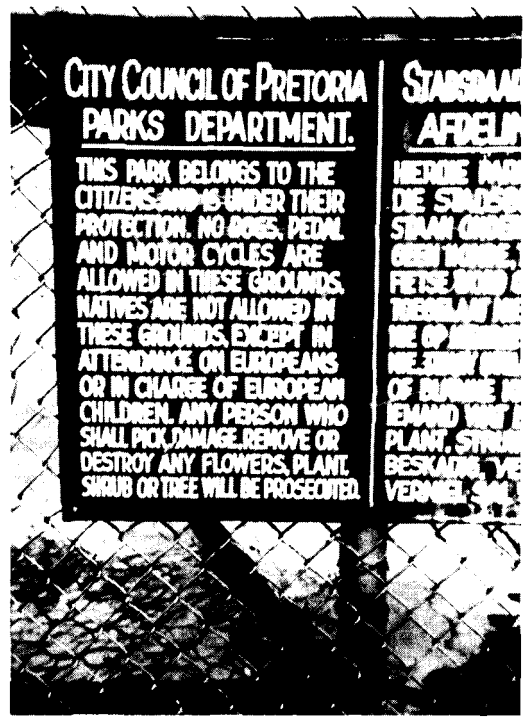
South African Defense Force and the role of Inkatha warlords in factional violence. That is to say, Buthelezi and his cronies are in many ways captives of Zulu nationalism as well as creators of it. Any regime that attempts to suppress such nationalism in the name of the inclusivist vision of a South African nation that has animated much of the anti-apartheid struggle risks civil war. Any political movement that can mobilize support of Zulu-speakers throughout the country, the largest single ethnic group, is a force to be reckoned with. Currently Inkatha looks like it has failed in this ambition, but the more that group is seen to have disgraced the proud Zulu heritage, the more fertile the field for a resurgent nationalism.

Can a Singular Political Community Emerge?

Virtually all of the prescriptions for transforming social relations produced by the major parties in the south of Africa are framed in terms of a project of nation building. All of the proposals that can be entertained for constitution making presume the creation of a national civil society, even if some people are becoming more pessimistic that such a society can be legislated into existence. But is it possible to create within the boundaries of present-day South Africa a singular national political community? Can a nation be built, fashioned according to the Western European templates that overlaid the great nineteenth-century political ideologies of nationalism, liberalism, and socialism? One way to address these questions is to examine the geographies of state power and capitalism within the region. Another is to examine whether there are symbols around which all people living inside the boundaries can build a positive sense of identity as citizens of something called South Africa.

Fundamental to social transformation in the south of Africa are questions of boundaries: geopolitical, economic, and cultural. The first proposition of the Freedom Charter, the 1955 declaration of nonracial democracy embraced by the ANC (African National Congress) and others, is that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no


CITY COUNCIL OF PRETORIA
PARKS DEPARTMENT.
THIS PARK BELONGS TO THE
PROTECTION. NO BIKES, PEDAL
AND MOTOR CYCLES ARE
ALLOWED IN THESE GROUNDS.
NATIVES ARE NOT ALLOWED IN
THESE GROUNDS, EXCEPT IN
ATTENDANCE ON EUROPEANS
OR IN CHARGE OF EUROPEAN
CHILDREN. ANY PERSON WHO
SHALL PICK, DAMAGE, REMOVE OR
DESTROY ANY FLOWERS, PLANT,
SHRUB OR TREE WILL BE PROSECUTED.

United Nations Photo

government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people." Many radical Africanists have objected to this proposition on the grounds that it gives equal validity to whites' claims to the land. But few have raised serious questions about what "South Africa" or "the people" might mean in this context. South Africa is quite simply the territory bounded by the borders of the republic; the people are those who live there. Yet the Republic of South Africa is not simply a sovereign national state with racially restrictive voting laws and a history of institutionalized racism such as characterized the U.S. South.

South Africa is an imperial state. By this I do not just mean that it is a product of European imperialism, nor just that the Boers have been colonialists in Namibia and destabilizing aggressors in the region. Nor am I just restating the now-discredited theory of "internal colonialism" with its emphases on modes of production and economic exploitation (although I would suggest that the notion of colonialism is worth revisiting, especially in

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regard to the experiences of people subject to the South African state). And I certainly do not mean to give credence to the stupid "separate development" fantasies of Afrikaner nationalism, the doctrines of apartheid, or the repellent lunacies of the white right wing.

The South African state is imperial in at least two important senses. First, the geographical core of state power, the populations and resources that form its primary fiscal base, is not coincident with the range of coercive reach. The majority of people living inside the boundaries of the republic (including the so-called "Independent National States") are superfluous to the requirements of capital and state power. Put crudely, they will never be called upon to work for wages or to face death in the name of the state (or offer their sons and brothers to do so). Second, the republic claims dominion over territories wherein reside people with potentially strong claims to separate nationhood. There are numerous groups of people living under the South African state who could exercise a claim to nationhood in the face of central power. At present the Boers and the Zulus are the most insistent of these peoples. But it would be very foolish to presume that there are not others who could resurrect memories of precolonial identities, or that such claims are merely a product or legacy of apartheid that can be easily dismissed. Moreover, the symbols available celebrating a positive sense of difference in this context are generally more powerful than those proclaiming an inclusive identity.

Only the African National Congress and its Communist Party (SACP) allies have a tradition of inclusive nationalism, dating from the 1940s (the SACP was first with its "Native Republic" manifesto). The ANC is currently the most popular political movement in South Africa; it is also the most popular South African political movement outside that country. If the ANC gained office within the state, however, the leadership would still have to reconcile its inclusivist claims with those nations upholding a strongly particularist and exclusivist vision of their identity.

Most popular readings of South African history tend to underestimate the precariousness of the system of domination that was forged into the Union of South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century, the structures of which remain largely in place today. There is a widespread tendency, too, to view the establishment of capitalism in the region as inevitable and to presume that the geographies of capital are coincident with the geographies of power within the state. In retrospect it may appear that white domination in a unified national state was inevitable. Yet even with the backing of Imperial Britain the early rulers did not have the resources to subject all Africans within the region to their power. The sociospatial distributions that became fixed at the end of the nineteenth century into a framework of colonies, reserves, and protectorates represented the outcome of a long history of wars, alliances, treaties, deals, and dirty tricks. There was nothing inevitable about the emergence of a national South Africa.

Some African kingdoms were better able to protect their territories during the nineteenth-century conquest of the interior than others. The Basotho under King Moshoeshoe, for instance, through skillful warfare and diplomacy were able to gain recognition from the British and "Protectorate" status. Thus the tiny mountain country of Lesotho is an independent state, even as it is totally dependent economically upon exporting labor to South African industry and totally at the mercy of the South African military. Similarly, the Swazi kingdom retained its sovereignty under British protection while the more powerful Zulu kingdom was conquered by the imperial armies. Until the 1950s, there was a presumption amongst the South African ruling classes that these territorial enclaves of Basutoland (Lesotho) and Swaziland, along with Bechuanaland, would be incorporated into the union. In many ways they served as models for the Afrikaner nationalists' schemes of apartheid. By the 1960s, however, they were granted independence because, contrary to original intentions, the British were compelled to accede to the wishes of their inhabitants.

Until the late nineteenth century, much of southern African history could be told as a

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story of complex and protracted turf wars. But diamond and gold mining changed all of that. By the end of the century, the region was far too important to the global capitalist economy to be left to the locals. In a final and brutal exercise of coercive power (known by the British as the "Boer War," by the Boers as the "Second War of Freedom," and by others as the "South African War"), the British imperial government set about subordinating all political communities in the region and constructing a central state.

Creating this state required both a practical negotiation of central power with the existing power centers in the region, political as well as economic, African as well as settler. Boers were incorporated with British into a single (more-or-less) democratic political community. African kingdoms were incorporated into the governing structures through a modified scheme of indirect rule and recognition of certain political authorities within the "tribal system." Under this scheme the Crown, acting through local commissioners, assumed an overlordship in the name of a fictional "Supreme Chief." The mining industry was the power behind the throne.

If those parts of the African population that were progressively integrated into the capitalist economy had been incorporated into the political community in the ways working classes were elsewhere, a fully national state might have been created in South Africa. They were not. A division of citizenship and sovereignty marked by race and serving to justify coercive labor practices and white supremacist racism was created instead. Yet the dreams of political and social segregationists have always foundered on the rocks of economic integration. The resulting state that has been formed over the last century or so in the south of Africa is part imperial and part national. And the experiences of those subject to its various aspects are fundamentally different. The vast majority of Africans in the region have experienced central state power as an alien imposition. The imperial state has excluded and brutalized its subject African populations, fostering a sense of alienation and a desire to destroy its structures.

Coercing African Labor

One of the primary preoccupations of policy-makers throughout the twentieth-century history of the South African state has been the question of securing African labor. Indeed, legitimating the coercion and control of African people as a source of labor has been a fundamental factor in structuring the South African state. The concern with labor generally had three aspects: first, devising strategies and justifications for coercing and inducing Africans to sell their labor in the capitalist economy; second, controlling the allocation of labor between sectors of production; and third, ensuring the exploitability and reducing the cost of labor.

For most of the time until the 1970s, these policies were devised in a context of generalized labor shortage. Since the 1960s, and increasingly throughout the 1980s, there have been more people seeking to labor in South African capitalism than the number of available jobs. Throughout this period, structures of state power such as the "Homelands," which had originally been understood in terms of strategies for extracting cheap labor supplies from indigenous African societies, were transformed into dumping grounds for people deemed "surplus" to the requirements of South African capitalism.

Apartheid was pre-eminently a racist system of controls on movement and residence, framed in a state ideology interpreting political and social rights in terms of nationalist principles relating people to places. According to this scheme, different nations were entitled to sovereignty over their own homelands, and members of these nations were entitled to rights only in these homelands. In international terms, apartheid is the norm, not the exception. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, for example, with its myriad of largely unaccountable (from the perspective of those subject to it) and frequently demeaning procedures, rules, and paperwork and its network of offices and operatives resembles nothing so much as the pass system of apartheid. More than a million illegal immigrants are apprehended and removed each year; all others who would seek to enter and work in

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the United States must have their passports stamped and are subject to a system of control over movement and residence.

For more than a century labor migration to South Africa, especially to the mines, has been an integral feature of life in the southern African region as far north as present-day Tanzania. In 1960 there were some 486,400 registered "foreign" migrants from neighboring states into South Africa on short-term labor contracts. By 1984, this figure had dropped to 79,025. This drop is explained in large part because the mining industry, by far the biggest employer of migrants, "internalized" its labor force while neighboring "frontline" states started restricting recruitment of their citizens. In the 1990s employment within the mining sector is contracting, with low-grade mines being closed and migrant workers being laid off. At the same time as the figures for "registered" labor migrants are falling, arrests and deportations of "illegal" migrants and refugees are soaring. Even for very poor people in South Africa, the opportunities are greater than for many other Africans outside the republic. Refugees and migrants could start moving into a free democratic and nonracial South Africa in numbers heretofore undreamed of.

In the world's wealthiest states of Western Europe, Japan, and the United States ever increasing numbers of "illegal" immigrants are forming a subproletariat that does not have, and never will have, the political, social, and economic rights of citizens. And although the militaristic nationalism of the wealthiest states is perhaps diminishing, the economic boundaries distinguishing their full citizens from impoverished outsiders are being strengthened. Even while the Berlin Wall was falling, the United States government was building an iron wall along its southern border with Mexico. And the declaration that refugees from the turmoil in Haiti are "economic" is considered grounds for forced removal of tens of thousands of people back to a precarious fate on that island. The irony of nation building in South Africa is that the most powerful appeal to a sense of national commonality may rest on the naked self-interest of excluding other Africans from the capitalist heartlands of the republic.

The apartheid system both controlled and obscured patterns of movement that had been in existence for many generations over the last century. Most of the repressive structures of the apartheid state originated in schemes to limit and control the urbanization of African workers. In recent years, however, the urbanization of Africans has been taking place at an extremely rapid rate. In the absence of repressive controls, large-scale movements of population can take place across national boundaries as well as within the republic. Most of the present populations of Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Zambia have at least the language skills necessary to seek work in the urban areas of South Africa. Many can enter pre-existing networks of migrant communities. But many will encounter the run-of-the-mill ethnic conflicts over jobs and scarce resources that abound in urban areas everywhere. Immigrants from Mozambique can look forward to a very tough time in places like Soweto, where the minority Shangaan-speaking population already occupies the bottom of the pile of ethnic stereotypes.

Whatever constitutional arrangements are ultimately worked out for the political system in South Africa, there are certain structures of political and cultural power that will persist. These will either have to be incorporated into any future state, thereby compromising the appearances of a decisive break with the apartheid past, or will have to be sidelined, thereby compromising the effectiveness of policymaking in the rural areas or creating nodes of resistance that could become expressed in terms of nationalism. Among the most complicated of these are those connected with the "traditional leaders" in the homelands.

Since at least the 1920s, chiefs have been drawn increasingly into the government of African people in the rural areas. With the Bantu Authorities system instigated in the 1960s, the position of chief became ever more regulated and dependent on the authorities in the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria. Many chiefs were deposed by the apartheid government and replaced with stooges who

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could be relied upon to carry out government edicts. But many of the chiefs were struggling to make the best out of a bad situation and retained the loyalty and support of their subjects. The bureaucrats and official ethnologists who had to deal with these leaders were, and are, constantly negotiating the necessity of recognizing their authority while at the same time trying to control it.

Political Authority and Traditional Leaders

There are many people in rural South Africa who feel a profound sense of allegiance to traditional leaders. There are also many self-serving impostors in positions of chief who have little legitimacy among their subjects. This situation is extraordinarily complex around the country, and contestation over the authority of chiefs in some instances involves generations-old struggles. In 1989 the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) was established by a group of activists involved with the United Democratic Front. Contralesa is now an ANC-aligned body attempting to garner support for the democratic movement while countering the claims of Inkatha and similar movements for chiefly loyalties. Contralesa's strategy for democratizing the chieftainship is to combine recognition of hereditary chiefs with popularly elected advisory councils and build them into a system of local government in the rural areas.

The ANC's rising interest in homeland leaders and traditional chiefs was well illustrated last year at the June 16th Uprising commemoration rally in Soweto. Unlike the previous year, when the first June 16th rally since the unbanning of the liberation movements saw a celebration of rambunctious youthful militancy, the 1991 rally was a sedate affair bringing to the platform an array of chiefs and homeland leaders. Nelson Mandela, a son of the royal house of the Tembu, arrived at the First National Bank Stadium in his red Mercedes Benz (a gift from workers at the Mercedes plant in East London) accompanied by Xhosa praise-singers in a Cadillac limousine. His circuit of the arena was accompanied by amplified praises in traditional style. The whole performance of the rally, as well as the speeches, sought to emphasize the African roots of the congress movement.

The ANC is increasingly presenting itself as the umbrella organization for homeland leaders and chiefs in contradistinction to Inkatha, which is portrayed as sectional and tribalistic. But this is a difficult and dangerous strategy, and while most of the homeland rulers are pledging allegiance to the ANC and its policy of dismantling the homelands, many of them are at the same time building up the political movements through which they mobilize support locally. In this they follow the lead of Chief Buthelezi. Some, namely Lucas Mangope in Bophutatswana and Oupa Gqozo in the Ciskei (who was initially greeted as a savior when he toppled the Sebe regime) are girding their forces to go it alone.

The situation with "traditional leaders" is especially complex because in practically every instance where there is an official incumbent in the position of "chief" there is often one or more challenger. Incumbents are backed by the financial and coercive power of Pretoria and the particular homeland government (buttressed by the authority of the official ethnologists' readings of lineage and domain). Challengers draw chiefly on the authority of oral traditions, resistance to apartheid, and popular support. Last year in Lebowa, for example, impoverished villagers in Sekhukuneland managed to risk hundreds of thousands of rands in legal fees in order to mount a court challenge to the individual installed as "Paramount Chief" of the Pedi by the Lebowa Government. Fortunately they won their challenge, thus avoiding financial catastrophe.

It is frequently forgotten in discussions of the "new South Africa" that half of the population lives in those rural areas that were once called "Native Reserves," then "Bantustans," then "Homelands," then "Black States," then "National States." Fifty-seven percent of South African women live in these regions. These rural people are the poorest, least powerful, and most vulnerable section of the population. They are for the most part dependent on remittances of wages from migrant workers in urban areas and mines. They are easily

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ignored. In the mostly desperate conditions of the so-called "Homelands," access to the resources necessary to sustain life has for generations been governed by corruption and patronage. These relationships will not disappear overnight. Moreover, the danger is that new and possibly corrupt forms of local power will arise in the rural areas to fill the gap left by the old.

Structurally speaking, the rural peoples of southern Africa can have but little power within any state. They do not control productive resources or capital. Their labor is surplus to the needs of the formal economy. They live subject to repressive regimes whose capacities for coercion are economically dependent upon the central state. Their only source of power comes from the creation of a sense of commonality between themselves and those who do control the productive and destructive resources within the state. Or they can mobilize that power which comes from people who are prepared to face death in the name of a political community.

One of the ironies of the fighting between migrant workers in urban hostels and township residents on the Witwatersrand in recent years is that it made plausible one of the last-ditch strategies of the era of apartheid, that of dividing the urban and rural populations. Many urban dwellers have completely lost contact with the rural areas from whence their ancestors migrated; many others are themselves recent arrivals from the rural areas. Culturally, the urban-rural divide is fraught with all the misunderstanding, resentment, and arrogance that urbanites heap on provincials the world over.

As Africans in the urban townships experience increasing levels of unemployment, the plight of rural people, which is frequently more dire, can seem unimportant. For instance, the vigor with which many township residents on the Witwatersrand were prepared to call for the dismantling of the hostels and removal of the migrants back to Natal revealed how easily the antipathies between urban and rural could be aggravated, especially among urban youths with little understanding of conditions in the rural areas. Many of the young men I talked with during the first bout of warfare in Soweto were determined to defend their community by burning the hostels and forcing the "Zulus back to Kwa Zulu." They were little aware or concerned about the fact that remittances from these men's pitiful wages are most often the difference between life and death for rural families.

Complexities

The complexity of the new settlement and movement patterns that have emerged in the last half dozen or so years since the pass system and antisquatting regulations broke down in the republic are very poorly understood. In the Witwatersrand, the area around Johannesburg, it is estimated that nearly half of the population lives in shacks. Outside Durban there is a huge sprawling shack city known as Inanda with a population exceeding half a million and probably approaching one million people. Nationally the number of people living in shacks or "informal housing" probably exceeds the total number of white people in the country.

Within these "informal" settlements, control over access to space and essential resources such as water quickly becomes subject to the patronage of people who control the means of violence and who can establish links with outside authorities to protect the settlement and draw resources to it. With the exception of Inkatha, none of the political movements has made much headway in the complex mire of squatter politics. Inkatha has done this only by forming alliances with the corrupt controllers of black local governments.

Young men in the established, or "formal," black townships, the principal combatants in the battles with apartheid's repressive machinery, have a different story. They have come of age within a culture of anti-apartheid struggle and resistance. Any new regime will have to incorporate them in more or less formal and bureaucratized political structures where they will discover the limitations of local branch meetings. The glory days of "the Struggle" are already over. Many young people are actively participating in branches of the Youth League, writing reports, passing motions, and recording minutes. But I also know young comrades who are in the business of stealing weapons from

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policemen; for them the war with Inkatha was an exciting and dangerous adventure.

Half of the population of South Africa is under the age of fifteen. Only 20 percent of black children of secondary school age are attending school. The vast majority of these are receiving an education inadequate for the requirements of the twentieth-century global economy. They attend schools that are overcrowded and run by teachers who are themselves poorly educated and demoralized by the conditions of their work. Students are poorly supplied with facilities and textbooks, nor are their home environments typically conducive to quiet study.

Employment prospects are grim. Between 40 and 50 percent of the work force is unemployed; the number is increasing as more young people enter the work force competing for fewer jobs. In the absence of miraculous economic growth rates (in excess of 10 percent per year) most young people will not be able to contemplate a life of even badly paid wage labor, let alone the dreams of better things for the children that have been the staple of working life all around the globe. For some time now these people have been spoken of as the "lost generation."

The contradictions of coercion in a reconstituted South Africa, then, will be twofold. First, creation of an inclusive political community within a unified democratic state will require repression of those who would foster exclusivist nationalisms, but such repression only furthers the cause of nationalism. Second, protection of the fiscal base of the state, the capitalist economy, will require repressing many of the claims of those who are currently excluded from the formal economy. Some ameliorative measures are likely to be put in place, but no large-scale and fundamental redistribution can occur without the agreement of big capital. That is not likely to be forthcoming. But repression of such demands can foster the emergence of destabilizing revolutionary movements.

South Africa's moment of truth in the liberation struggle comes also at a time when it is becoming increasingly apparent that the great achievements of liberal democracy and the welfare state in the West, particularly the enfranchisement of the working classes and the provision of a minimum social security, are things of the past. Socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised underclasses, particularly of "illegal" laboring immigrants are becoming the norm in the wealthier democracies. In most of the third world, the old visions of modernization, development, and democracy have foundered on shoals of poverty and debt. Globally, state power more often resembles a big protection racket than a means to security, justice, and welfare.

Over the past couple of years it has been quite common in South Africa to encounter analogies drawn between Presidents de Klerk and Gorbachev: two bald reformers on a roll. Today the Soviet Union has passed from the map. What once seemed like an enormously powerful monolithic state has fractured into dozens of pieces, and the imperial state has retreated to the Russian heartland amid economic collapse. The South African imperium could collapse just as fast. □

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Bill Freund

THE UNIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

A basic assessment about the trade-union movement in Africa would go something like the following: the emergence of postwar nationalist movements coincided with economic expansion and enormous pressure on the living standards of the rising number of African workers. In this historical context, unions (or better, labor militancy more generally) played a big role and were enormously successful, given the slight weight of secondary industry in underdeveloped extractive economies. The key workers were postal, dockworkers, and even teachers and those in such sectors as the railways and plantations. To this labor militancy the independence movements owed a great deal.

However, once in power the nationalists, particularly the more ideologically ambitious from Nkrumah onward, subverted and destroyed independent working-class activity. The state-controlled unions lost any vigor or vitality. Namibia is only the latest in a long list of countries that exemplify this pattern. With economic stagnation and decline in independent Africa, although some worker organizations reassert their freedom and play a key role in periods of political change (as in Zambia today), neither the state nor the unions are in a position to improve significantly the lives of wage workers or the far larger numbers of newly urbanized and impoverished men and women.

Probably the most interesting question to ask about the South African trade unions is whether or not this is the pattern they will follow—incorporation and decline—as apartheid structures crumble and those in African politics begin to reach out for at least partial access to power in the 1990s. There is certainly the possibility of such a pattern in the attitude of politicians inside and out of the African National Congress (ANC). The drain of African leadership from the unions has already begun, with Cyril Ramaphosa and Sydney Mafumadi of the Congress of South African Trade Unions' (COSATU) executive shifting their careers following election to top ANC office at the conference in Durban last year.

However, there are also important countervailing tendencies that give the workers a chance. Partly, they are contextual. South Africa is far more industrialized than other African countries. A democratic government will have to reckon with powerful and well-entrenched institutions in many walks of life and millions of non-Africans who would not accept incorporation into a new one-party system. If the ANC comes to power, it will do so from a relatively weak position with limited capacity for institutional transformation. As a result, civil society may prove to be far more complex and far more resilient than elsewhere in Africa, allowing the labor movement considerable scope.

However, the particular history and strengths of the unions will also play a very important role. Their capacity for self-defense and for broadcasting a wider vision of economic and social transformation so far greatly exceeds that of the ANC, let alone its rivals. According to a current assessment by the editor of the *S A Labour Bulletin:*

> The non-racial trade union movement, with COSATU at its centre, is now a more influential social force than it has ever been. It is a key player in drafting labour legislation and in restructuring the National Manpower Commission. It is beginning to negotiate on economic issues with the state and employers. It is the main pillar of organized support for the ANC, and as

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such will have a major impact on national negotiations and the transition to democracy. . . . If a new baby is being born in South Africa, COSATU is determined to be one of the parents.

In 1987, a new Labor Relations Act was drafted, largely at the instigation of business. It represented a significant new set of constraints on the freedom unions had won since 1979, making the declaration of a legal strike more difficult, allowing firms to claim damages from unions over illegal strikes, reducing the power of industrial courts, and changing the definition of unfair labor practices. Over three years, COSATU led the fight, first with business and then directly with the state, against the promulgation of the act and eventually secured crucial modifications that very substantially reduced the limits it tried to impose on union power. Once again it confounded skeptics with its creativity and effectiveness.

In writing about the trade-union movement, I will mostly be considering COSATU, a federation created in 1985. The name reveals two specific sources of origin: the so-called independent or emergent or nonracial unions that federated into the FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) grouping in 1979 and the historic linkage to the Congress tradition, associated with the African National Congress, the South African Communist party, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, which existed almost entirely in exile from the early 1960s to 1990.

However, it would be inaccurate to equate COSATU with the unions. There is a far smaller federation, NACTU (National Council

GLOSSARY

African National Congress (ANC). Founded in 1912, illegal from 1960 to 1990, it has gone through many changes but generally has been the premier African political movement. It admitted non-Africans to membership in 1969 and to leadership positions in 1985.

Colored and Asian. Legally constituted racial categories under apartheid. Those belonging to these categories suffered discrimination but always had the right to move without passes and to belong to trade unions and to strike. Partly the creation of state policy, these categories represent a strong cultural reality molded from below as well.

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Formed as a federation in 1985 from a variety of so-called emergent or democratic unions, it is now the major South African trade union federation and works in alliance with the SACP and the ANC.

Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). A federation that existed between 1979 and 1985 that formed an important component in and influence on COSATU, which replaced it.

Influx Control. Apartheid terminology for the regulations attempting to control the access of African people to jobs and residence in "white South Africa." The pass system, cornerstone of influx control, was abolished in 1986.

Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Formed in 1990 but based on the Inkatha so-called cultural movement launched in 1975, it is the dominant political force in the Kwa Zulu "homeland" and among many migrant workers from there. It practices ethnic mobilization and has opposed revolutionary social and economic strategies for change.

National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). A major affiliate of COSATU launched in its present form in 1987.

National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa (NUM). An important COSATU affiliate, which was a founder-member in 1985.

Pan-African Congress (PAC). Based on an ideology of Africanism, it broke away from the ANC in 1959 and was effectively illegal from 1960 to 1990. It remains a significant player in black South African politics.

Populists and Workerists. Terms used, somewhat pejoratively, to describe tendencies in the union movement in the 1980s.

South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU). A major affiliate of COSATU formed in 1989.

South African Communist Party (SACP). Banned from 1950 to 1990 but reconstituted secretly after self-dissolution in the mid-fifties, it has since operated in close alliance with the ANC, and its membership consists virtually entirely of ANC members.

South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). A trade-union federation formed in 1955 when the extant Trades and Labor Council split. Strongly communist-influenced, allied to the ANC, and successful in attracting African members, it was effectively crippled and destroyed through repression after 1960 and functioned thereafter mostly in exile.

Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). The moderate grouping that emerged from the 1955 split that also created SACTU. Always dominated by white craft workers and working within the existing legal framework, it dissolved at the end of 1986.

Wiehahn Commission. Constituted in 1977 after the urban uprisings of the previous year and reporting in 1979, this key commission recommended legalizing African trade unionism, a recommendation the state accepted. □

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of Trade Unions), which organizes one hundred thousand plus workers and is sympathetic to the Pan-African Congress. There are many independent unions, particularly organizing white, Colored, and Asian workers, that are "apolitical," sometimes more or less sweetheart unions but in other cases reasonably well run and effective. There is a potentially militant but so far ineffective racist white trade union movement crosscutting industrial lines, which sometimes promotes itself as the white COSATU! Nonetheless, concentrating on COSATU seems the right way to go about a brief evaluation of the significance of the South African trade union movement today. For the sake of convenience, the conventional South African racial categories—white, African, Colored, and Asian—will be used throughout.

Organizing Struggles

The history of trade unionism in South Africa is organizationally very complicated. On the one hand, there is a half-forgotten tradition of white militancy with strong British roots, a militancy that powered a number of huge strikes between 1907 and 1922, overwhelmingly steered in the direction of protecting the situation of a minority of the work force against being drowned by the weight of unskilled cheap labor. That militancy never built powerful, long-lasting unions; it has long since been channeled into a trade unionism dependent on state regulation and patronage. Eventually many Indian and Colored workers, almost as numerous a part of the South African working class taken together as the whites, were also signed up in such unions.

On the other hand were waves of organization and labor resistance going back to the years after World War I on the part of a growing African working class—waves that surged forth in a variety of organizational forms but failed to solidify into the enduring basis of a movement until recently. Before 1979, it was in fact illegal for African workers to strike, and a multitude of barriers had been put up against their permanent residence in the white city. Trade unions could organize Africans, but such organizations could not cross the color line nor could they achieve any official recognition.

In the 1940s in the midst of the rapid expansion of secondary industry in South Africa, a whole range of these tendencies was represented in the South African Trades and Labor Council. As the white-dominated Labor party (Smuts's very junior wartime partner) moved leftward and rejected apartheid, it lost almost all support from the white electorate. The unity of the council buckled and finally broke under the pressure of a hostile racist state, a fearful and protectionist white working class moving one way, and an increasingly militant African urban working class going the other.

The left end of the Council regrouped to form the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1955. SACTU was nonracial but largely African in membership. It was weak in strategically key industries such as metals and unable to challenge the system very effectively. The illegal Communist party, which saw the future mostly in terms of piggybacking upon a militant African nationalism, was dominant in SACTU. SACTU defenders have claimed that this federation evolved a distinctive kind of "political unionism." Critics have counter-claimed that such a project privileged national politics over worker organization, neglected possibilities outside the conspiratorial world of the underground, and ultimately orphaned the African workers, leaving them leaderless.

Worker organization was at a low point in the 1960s, a decade when the apartheid system was at its peak of effectiveness and vigor while the economy boomed. However, after this very difficult phase, a major renewal took place, a renewal that has gone from strength to strength with few major setbacks. Several elements were important in the new unionism, whose beginnings are usually linked to the massive, unorganized strike waves in the docks (1972) and then the factories (1973) of the port city of Durban, where industry had grown at a particularly fast clip. One was simply the rapid development of an urban African population, cut off from rural roots by apartheid influx

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control, with its burgeoning demands for the satisfaction of basic needs, growing intolerance of the racist and paternalistic order in the work place, and gradually increasing skill and literacy levels. A second was the related presence *within* the conservative trade union movement of increasing numbers of dissatisfied, potentially militant nonwhite workers incorporated into so-called parallel branches or organizations. The Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), SACTU's rival, had shifted its position on racial integration several times, but the very needs of white workers demanded incorporation of larger numbers of workers of all colors. Thus the American- and German-dominated car industry of the eastern Cape, originally founded in the 1920s with a lily-white work force, was expanding forty years later on the basis of Colored and then African assembly line workers, who came to political life soon enough. A few white TUCSA union officials provided valuable organizational skills and know-how to newly stirring workers and worker-leaders.

A third factor was the availability of a key layer of young white graduates, alienated by the black consciousness movement from their African confreres and often full of new ideas associated with Western Marxism and the New Left in England and elsewhere, who threw themselves into the unions and formed an invaluable layer of cadres. Later they were joined by idealistic Indian and Colored university and high-school products as well; all provided skills lacking in the poorly educated African masses. Finally, this new breed of organizers was to some degree able to join forces with older African workers who were SACTU survivors.

Militancy in the 1970s

The 1970s started with a revival of militancy mostly grouped around so-called black consciousness ideas that attracted intellectuals, but from 1976 to 1977, the rapidly growing number of students in new poor-quality high schools in African townships became the core of a resistance movement that rocked the South African state. Some of these militants then came into the work force with a new spirit of defiance and a thirst for organization. Actually, many of the organized African workers of the late 1970s and early 1980s were rural migrants with little education, but some, including key cadres, were young men with a record of schoolboy defiance and resistance.

Apartheid conceptualized the African urban worker as a sojourner in town although in reality practical compromises had led in contradictory fashion to a massive expansion of townships aimed at the settlement of African families on the urban periphery. It had no answer to the new spirit of resistance. Splits among officials and politicians linked to the ruling National party led to the ouster of the Vorster government in the wake of the so-called "Muldergate" scandal and the turn toward reform under P.W. Botha in 1979. The state moved to entrench by steps the stabilization of township life and to legalize African trade unionism. The intention was to create a peaceful and apolitical outlet that would prevent industrial and political dissension from coming together. This intention was entirely frustrated, for the action of the Wiehahn Commission in legalizing African unions opened Pandora's box. It reflected the growing tendency in the business establishment, no longer able to count on effortless boom-year conditions and increasingly interested in the question of productivity, to accept that industrial relations in South Africa needed to change. Very quickly, unions overcame state strictures about organizing workers of different races and about organizing migrants along with resident urban workers.

A section of the numerous new unions being established came together into a tight federation, FOSATU. FOSATU decided to accept the logic of Wiehahn and convincingly turned its back on the historic legacy of rejectionism, accepting state registration as a valuable and useful tactic that would advance the terrain of struggle. Other unions, some still operating under the SACTU shadow, at first opposed this, but ultimately FOSATU was proven correct through its organizational successes.

FOSATU politics of the 1979–85 period is often described as "workerism." In practice, "workerism" covered a number of different tendencies. "Workerists" included those who

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disliked the ANC tradition, which they identified with Communist manipulation, populist demagoguery, and lack of genuine commitment to worker issues. It also included others who loved that tradition but sought to transform it into a more socialist and class-based one, so that workers would not just endorse replacing white bosses with black ones. Above all, it characterized the sensible and cautious who simply wanted to concentrate on building very tight, effective organizations at factory and branch level until some unassigned future date.

Unions outside FOSATU often rejected "workerism" as well as registration. The "populists," who wanted to propagandize enthusiastically for the ANC, the SACP (South African Communist party), and their armed struggle, feared a dampening of revolutionary impulse and varied in their commitment to practical organization and the construction of effective autonomous unions. SACTU propaganda was still insisting that it was impossible for unions to function effectively and honestly in "fascist" South Africa and sometimes succeeded in blocking FOSATU attempts at building international links.

It took four years to negotiate a new larger federation that embraced a wide range of the existing, expanding unions. Political and strategic differences coupled with the petty ambitions found in any organization stood in the way. The remarkable thing has been the gradually increasing coherence of the federation despite the initial differences. In 1985, there were approximately 400,000 members; in six years this total has tripled. COSATU has succeeded several times in calling huge general strikes for up to three days. The original diverse union structure has been largely remodeled in favor of a far smaller number of remolded, enlarged, industrially based, and centralized unions.

In the first years after federation, intense political differences created chasms among the principal unions. The differences are now less important. The entrants into COSATU who saw the unions primarily as political vanguards that simply aimed at mobilizing to help promote ANC-SACP politics have gradually been marginalized, in good part because they were so much less serious about building solid unions. The federation has swung its weight in key disputes around industrial unity when partisan factions have divided unions, convincingly showing the bias toward strengthening organization as a priority over favoring one particular political line above another.

On the whole, it is the FOSATU style that has triumphed and FOSATU ideas that have gradually surfaced as the more important ones (although the influence of certain smaller unions from the independent 1970s mold can also be pinpointed). Much of this is due to the congruence of that style with a dense and remarkably effective organizational thrust. The most successful COSATU unions have a powerful shop-steward structure and a form of union democracy that has welded officials and members together effectively and has generally avoided disastrous defeats on the industrial front. Workers feel in control at meetings and congresses and have prevented officials from taking advantage of their skills and positions. Based on this system of democratic control, which operates at its best with regard to workplace issues, there is a high level of solidarity and loyalty. Decisions, once accepted by a majority, are tightly enforced on all as binding mandates. A process organically linking struggle and negotiation has become second nature. In effect, this is the process that fuels the "expanded reproduction" of organizational strength.

Up to the early 1980s, COSATU predecessors made excellent use of the openings available through state reform legislation and through the need for multinationals to justify their presence in South Africa faced with a buildup in international boycott pressure. These successes changed the nature of the workplace in enhancing dignified treatment for workers on such issues as arbitrary dismissals, in eliminating the most obvious forms of racism, in regularizing the way employees were treated. From the early 1980s, particularly in capital-intensive industries such as chemicals and automobiles, major gains were also made on wages. Organized workers have consistently been able to beat inflation year in and year out in their wage hikes, and conditions have

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continued to improve despite the disastrously stagnant nature of the economy. Even failed strikes, such as the huge 1987 miners' strike, did not lead to the collapse or the derecognition of the union.

A key to understanding this process is the relationship between organized workers and the rest of the black population. Support for workers has tended to undermine the potential of a massive unemployed population from simply moving in as scabs during strikes. Perhaps this has been promoted by the extent to which COSATU has embraced ANC-SACP politics. There is clearly a potential for COSATU to form the basis of a rival socialist movement, but that potential is only discussed in the corridors and in private.

Alliances and Challenges

COSATU unions have lent their impressive organizational skills toward the construction of a so-called Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and the Communist party. This alliance operates in particular vis-à-vis negotiations with the National party government, which are now underway. COSATU has, for instance, been crucial in talks with the Inkatha Freedom party of M.G. Buthelezi to try and establish a basis for peace where thousands have died in bitter feuds that have partially been caused by the antagonism between the ANC and Inkatha. In this regard COSATU has remained relatively faithful to a congress perspective and thus still satisfies the pre-COSATU "populists." Even the populists realized some years ago that COSATU organization offered the possibility of a disciplined, structured response to a complex power system quite outside the political experience of the African population otherwise. At the level of national politics, COSATU officials proceed often without the kind of grass-roots mandate that typifies their industrial practices, but there is no reason to doubt that the majority of their workers favor the alliance.

Will that potential be harnessed to create a new sort of society in South Africa or will it gradually be marginalized as a moderate ANC moves toward the political center and seeks to dominate political life in the African townships and other settlements? So far the Tripartite Alliance has been a key factor in building some common purpose in a floundering, disorganized ANC, but it is not very clear what the union movement has received in return. At best, the last two years have seen not only the ANC but the SACP as well increasingly unequivocally support the idea of long-term trade union independence.

One perspective that can be identified from current COSATU discourse poses the main challenge as a struggle to win hegemony within the ANC against middle-class elements that will settle for a relatively conservative deal with white power structures that will benefit largely themselves. COSATU leaders who think this way imagine that there may be the possibility for the union movement to take the lead in economic reorientation and institutional restructuring—in effect, a working-class takeover of the liberation movement. This tendency, particularly notable in NUMSA, the union of metal and auto workers, aspires to harness a mixed economy in the interests of a socialist project that has not been discredited in South Africa despite defeats elsewhere in the world and counts on the union movement to play a central political role. This perspective often embodies the hope that the SACP can be won over or transformed to the cause of a radicalized ANC. The title of the best account of the pre-COSATU rise of labor, Steven Friedman's *Building Tomorrow Today,* succinctly captures the prefigurative socialist element that has inspired such union thinking.

Another perspective, particularly associated with the SACTWU (South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union), also incidentally thinking in terms of the weaknesses of the ANC, assumes that an ANC or partially ANC government cannot be trusted to represent the organized workers to any great extent. If it is not possible to have a working-class politics inside or outside the ANC, the main thrust must be to empower the union movement through entrenching its autonomy constitutionally and even in alliance with the employers. This tendency also talks in terms of forging a social contract but assumes the continued and permanent existence of strong, autonomous capitalists. It is, by implication at least, frankly

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hostile to the SACP. Few take seriously the old SACP idea of a two-stage revolution whereby a populist struggle for "national democracy" should be uncritically supported first while hoping at some distant future date that a socialist utopia will emerge. There are, however, still plenty of union politicians interested in socialism who are deeply committed to the ANC.

There are many potential weaknesses in the trade-union movement that come up in discussions among those who are trying to assess its future potential. COSATU has little definite organizational hold and few financial resources apart from what is vested in its stronger affiliates. The COSATU affiliates have a very uneven strength. Particularly those with one form or another of "workerism" in their background have retained much organizational dynamism, but some others are suffering from quite serious dislocations and dissension, often because the energies that once propelled them have shifted into other political directions.

As the unions expand and times change, ordinary African members become detached from the debates that dominate the center and from the layers of militant and dedicated shop stewards who played such a role in the past. Education programs have been underdeveloped in part due to political standoffs over their content, and this has added to the problem. Although the unions are slowly acquiring a competent and efficient bureaucratic structure, increasingly essential in response to their own successes in shop-floor struggles, one wonders if the gap between layers in the union will not widen in consequence.

Since 1988 or 1989, much of the growth in COSATU has come from workers who are not part of their classic sociological profile—Coloreds and Indians (of whom many or most according to current opinion polls support State President de Klerk), far more white-collar workers including teachers, and increasing numbers of women. These new recruits may be interested in COSATU effectiveness in terms of shop-floor bargaining, but they are not necessarily comfortable with the style or the content of COSATU politics. The dearth of women in leadership positions, despite their forming 36 percent of the membership according to a recent publication, is embarrassing.

On the other hand, if COSATU becomes in any sense isolated from other social forces in the African communities, will it remain as relatively immune to undercutting from the desperate and vast reserve army of labor that potentially exists outside its organizational ranks? The legitimation of an ANC government may herald a delegitimation of union struggles. Foreigners may be less inclined to supply COSATU with funding if the burning apartheid issue is considered closed. A postapartheid government may prefer to emphasize the spread of low-wage jobs to South Africa's millions of unemployed poor. It may also be beholden to the support or tolerance of business—national and international—which is extremely eager for a reassertion of shop-floor power. Business in South Africa is obsessed with the problem of low productivity, largely blamed on the work force.

There is a growing understanding of the need for a historical sea change that will shift the economy from an easy dependence on the cornucopia of mineral wealth to one that can export industrial commodities competitively. COSATU is probably promoting the most advanced thinking in the country on the problems and opportunities posed by so-called post-Fordist flexible production models and the requisite transformation of the labor force in terms of skills and perspectives to meet that challenge. Yet most powerful business figures, beyond the desire for labor peace, are completely uninterested in a social contract that would involve a significant shift in economic power or give organized workers a major say in economic planning.

Currently it is impossible to predict where future power struggles will lead in this area. To what extent will conservative forces entrench themselves socially, economically, and constitutionally in the negotiation period out of apartheid, which is now going to be a major factor? The international context will inevitably determine the prospects for the economy or the limits to those prospects. The remarkable history of the South African labor movement, however, suggests that it may well be able to

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maneuver within this set of circumstances, which will at least allow it to avoid oblivion and may give it a unique role in the reshaping of South African society. □

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Charles Onyango-Obbo

A LETTER FROM EAST AFRICA

Surveying Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda

Omar Bongo, the president of the West African state of Gabon, was once famous on the continent for his fashionable clothes and colorful lifestyle. Bongo was never a model democrat, yet today the man is famous for freedom-sounding political remarks. He is the one who recently said the winds of democratic change from Eastern Europe were "shaking the coconut trees" of Africa.

The democratic winds may be shaking the coconut trees of Africa, but they are not dropping any fruit. In the majority of the African countries, the coconut trees dried up twenty years ago. The continent's share of world commodity markets fell by 50 percent between 1970 and 1989. By the end of 1990, the standard of living of the average African was worse than at the end of the colonial period some thirty years before.

To be sure, not all the countries went to the dogs. In Kenya the middle class grew larger and richer. The poor, as if not to be outdone, also multiplied. Kenya's capital, Nairobi, is a thoroughly modern city. I was in Nairobi last in May 1991 and went with friends to the Yaya Center, a new multistoried pink-yellow office and shopping complex. I had been in Lisbon a couple of days before that, and the city was just recovering from a controversy caused by the opening of a similar building in downtown Lisbon. The people of Lisbon thought the building was an architectural monstrosity. Not so the Nairobi people. They had long ago gotten used to living with these strange structures. The Yaya Center is owned by a former cabinet minister, who was accused by colleagues in parliament of having got the money to build it in an equally modern way—through corrupt deals.

This is a popular road to wealth for Kenyan politicians and public officials. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), by 1988 they had stashed four billion dollars in private bank accounts abroad.

As the middle class, the poor, and corruption in Kenya all grew, so did repression. For thirteen years, president Daniel Toroitich arap Moi and his Kenyan African National Union (KANU) ruled the country with a big stick. In mid-1982, after an abortive military coup by junior officers, Moi's regime banned political parties and began beating up, detaining, and exiling critics of his one-party dictatorship.

By 1991 the opposition in Kenya had grown teeth. Moi, fighting for his political life, warned Kenyans that the "agitators" for "so-called democracy" were going to plunge the country in chaos similar to neighboring Uganda's.

Uganda was not always a strife-torn breadbasket. Up to the end of the 1960s, it was one of Africa's most prosperous states. Today it is one of its poorest. Winston Churchill once visited Uganda when it was still a British colony. So impressed was he by the country, its natural resources, and the affability of its people, that he dubbed it "the Pearl of Africa." The glow was snuffed out in 1971 when General Idi Amin grabbed power in a bloody coup d'état. Amin's regime was ousted in April 1979 by a combined force of Ugandan exiles and invading Tanzanian troops. Amin will not be forgotten for a while. In eight years,

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his army and security forces murdered between 500,000 and 800,000 people.

The government that succeeded Amin tried—and failed—to restore the rule of law through a December 1980 election. It ended up orchestrating a massive electoral theft in favor of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) led by Milton Obote. Several groups took to the bush to fight the UPC. In January 1986 the main guerrilla group, the National Resistance Army (NRA), rode triumphant into the towns after a bitter five-year war. The Obote government's counterinsurgency against the NRA left between 300,000 and 400,000 people dead, mostly in the southern part of the country where the fighting was concentrated.

On January 26, 1986, guerrilla chief Yoweri Museveni took power as Uganda's ninth ruler since the country's independence in 1962. A war-weary population hoped finally for peace. The peace never came. The years of bloodletting had bred a culture that was tolerant of violence and believed in its efficacy.

No group can, as yet, govern in Uganda if it is not militarily superior. No civil opposition is listened to, or taken seriously, unless it has an armed wing. Not surprisingly, the opposition groups that sprang up against the NRA government in the north and northeast chose to take up arms.

Both the government troops and the rebels have engaged in pervasive human rights abuses in the war. A report released last December by Amnesty International about the human rights situation, particularly in the north, tells a story of exceptional savagery by both sides. Exactly how many people have been killed in this conflict so far is not yet known. A tally from newspaper reports of the noncombatant civilians who have died is in the low thousands.

To the Museveni government's credit, the rest of the country outside the north and northeast is peaceful, and reconstruction has been done in some parts. Hundreds of miles of road have been rebuilt in most of the country, as have facilities for the small rich class—like four-star hotels and swimming pools and squash courts. The IMF is very fond of the Museveni government, because it has moved toward economic liberalization, even dismantling foreign exchange controls. It is very easy to buy foreign currencies in the many bureaus in Kampala City if you have the sackfuls of Uganda shillings they cost. Since 1987, when the government introduced a new currency, the shilling has depreciated by 2,500 percent against the U.S. dollar.

But even if all else were well, AIDS alone would still have brought the country to the brink of crisis. It is estimated that up to one million people could be HIV-positive. Last July President Museveni said in a speech that Uganda will have a population of about twenty-two million in 2010; without AIDS the population would have been about thirty-five million. The country's two-billion-dollar debt economy cannot handle the epidemic. Health services are on the verge of collapse. The per capita health expenditure on the country's 16.5 million people is about $2.

By Kenya and Uganda's standards, their neighbor Tanzania is boring. Tanzania has been one of Africa's most stable countries since it gained independence in 1961 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere. A charming, intelligent man, Nyerere's Fabian socialist heart led his government to proclaim *Ujaama,* a local brand of socialism, in 1967. His Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM-Party of Revolution) ruled, and continues to do so, as the sole legal party.

In 1985, Nyerere became only the third African president—after Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon—to step down peacefully from the presidency. Nyerere's successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, is generally less respected inside the country today than Nyerere and is certainly dwarfed by the old man internationally. Nyerere was one of the third world's most highly regarded statesmen and remains a prestigious figure as chair of the South-South Commission.

Tanzania became the highest per capita recipient of foreign aid in Africa during Nyerere's time. In spite of this and the egalitarian posture of Nyerere's *Ujaama,* the economic failure of his government was colossal. Perhaps he was distracted by literary pursuits, including translating Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* into

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the national language, Kiswahili. The Tanzania he passed to Mwinyi was a shambles with empty shop shelves everywhere. Many young Tanzanians do not know what a road without potholes looks like. If they live on the Indian Ocean island of Zanzibar, which joined with Tanganyika in 1964 to become the United Republic of Tanzania, they will see it on television. Mainland Tanzania still has no television station.

Mwinyi says he is determined to reform the economy. But corruption is so widespread, and he has had little success so far. Last year in a wave of crackdowns on corruption, police intercepted $500,000 being smuggled out of Zanzibar airport. The smugglers were still being questioned when orders came from the "highest authorities" on the island to release them and their booty. The "big men," as it had always been, had their way again.

Things might change. Two years ago Tanzanians started to get defiant and to demand an accountable government. The democracy movement has already produced its heroes, such as James Mapalala and other opposition figures, who were arrested last year when they staged a peaceful demonstration in the capital of Dar es Salaam to protest the refusal by the government to register the National Committee for Constitutional Reform (NCCR), one of several pressure groups formed to circumvent the ban on political parties.

An unusual figure appeared among the ranks of the Tanzanian opposition. He is Chief Abdullah Fundikira. In 1963, when Nyerere was stomping for a one-party state, Fundikira, who was minister of justice at the time, resigned as both minister and member of parliament because he did not support a one-party state.

Something about the stately, gray-haired Fundikira captures the picture of the current political situation in the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Beneath the reformist facades, there are elements of the old order.

This is truest in Kenya, where the tide of political events took a dramatic turn at the end of 1991. Early last December, internal dissidents, with a little help from Western donors threatening to cut aid, forced Moi to legalize opposition parties and allow open debate.

The time had come to take a close hard look at the opposition leaders. Apart from the churchmen, most of the opposition figures are very rich. Many were once ministers in Moi's regime or that of his predecessor, Jomo Kenyatta. Part of their wealth was made from advantageous political connections.

One of the stars of the opposition, the outspoken lawyer and president of the Law Society of Kenya, Paul Muite, is as good an example as one can find. In a Kenyan magazine interview, Muite was asked to explain why someone as wealthy as he was out on the streets campaigning for democracy and enduring abuse by the police. His answer was unusually blunt and revealing. Rich people like him, he argued, were the ones who would lose most if they let the lawlessness of Moi's regime continue. It was therefore their duty to take to the streets, to bring about the rule of law which guaranteed the security of their wealth and the freedom to enjoy it in peace. There are very many such people in the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), the main opposition group.

But if FORD takes power, the structure of the country's unfair social and economic system will still remain unaltered. Only the actors will change. Cynics say the difference between Moi and his men and the opposition is one of style. Around Nairobi, there are sprawling slums where over 600,000 people live in abject poverty. It may not be long before they and the growing army of Kenya's unemployed take to the streets to stake their claim. The one group of Kenyans that will have a lot of business to do in the future will still be the riot police. For now, the worry is that the state-inspired rioting that broke out in March might scuttle a peaceful transition to democracy.

In Tanzania, CCM doesn't have to cast fearful glances over its shoulder at the opposition, which was formally legalized in February. CCM, despite its diminished stature, still stands tall. It retains the loyalty of some of the country's most brilliant minds, as well it might. The CCM government is, after all, the one that made it possible for nearly every adult Tanzanian to read and write Swahili. Many

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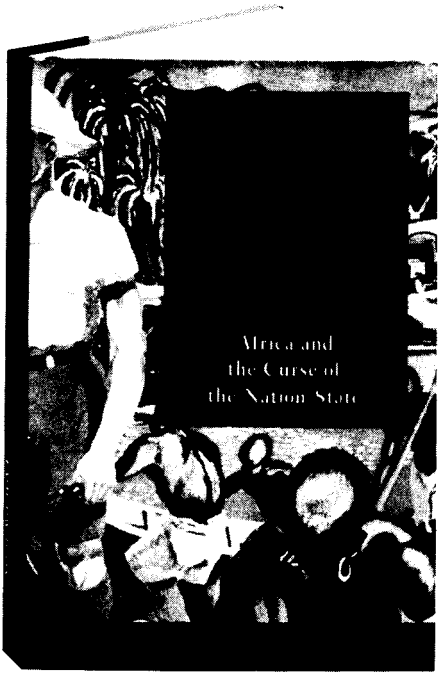
Tanzanians are still proud of the prestige their government and country had as the principal backer and exile base of the liberation movements from Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Uganda during Amin's rule. The opposition is, understandably, reluctant to question this record and CCM's argument that it sacrificed the comforts of the Tanzanians for the greater "African cause."

The Zanzibaris, though, are angry. They believe the mainland robbed them of the wealth from the export of the island's spices, before the collapse of the world commodities market. A quarrelsome people, the islanders want out of the union. If they press their secessionist demands too hard, they might have to fight for them, because the mainland is not ready to let them go yet.

Uganda, meanwhile, needs a bit of prayer and lots of statesmanship. The government, citing the continued anarchy in parts of the country, postponed elections in 1990 and now promises they will be held in 1994. The Museveni government must overcome great odds. A new constitution is being drafted, but the government says it does not favor a constitution that will provide for multiparty politics. There are also strong feelings against the veto powers that the present law gives to the army in the proposed constitutional assembly. Some political groups have rejected the whole process out of hand. Another opportunity to forge a national consensus looks headed for the rocks.

The bitterness that civil war always leaves has continued to deepen. For the first time in the country's troubled history, some opponents of Museveni's government now openly preach revenge against him and "his people" if they ever take power. If this says anything, it is that the chapter on Uganda in the history of East Africa will remain written in blood. □



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Alex de Waal and Mark Duffield

CAN AFRICA CONQUER FAMINE?

The Political Sources of Disaster

We [the Dinka] do not just starve; someone has to force starvation upon us.—A woman displaced from Southern Sudan, April 1986

Indeed, in the terrible history of famines in the world, it is hard to find a case in which a famine has occurred in a country with a free press and an active opposition within a democratic system.

— Amartya Sen*

Both these statements are true, and yet there is a terrible irony in them. The Dinka woman, driven from her home by the savage raids of Sudanese Arab militiamen, was, that very same month, entitled to vote in the first free multi-party elections in her country in eighteen years. The winner of the elections, the Umma party headed by Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi, then proceeded to give further arms to the Arab militias. Two years later, the cumulative effect of their raids on the Dinka population was to create famine of a severity unequaled in the modern world. In one camp, el Meiram, during the summer of 1988, death rates averaged 1 percent per day. Had there not been a constant inflow of new migrants, the camp would simply have become a graveyard.

Yet, throughout this period, there was an uncensored press in Khartoum and fierce debates in the constituent assembly. Newspaper editorials warned the prime minister that he would be remembered by history for "treachery, infamy and war," but only one of the forty newspapers and journals published in the capital reported on an incident in April 1988, when a trainload of six thousand famine victims arrived at Khartoum Central railroad station, whereupon six children died on the platform. Delegates concerned with human rights objected to provisions in a draft Islamic penal code that mandated amputation of the hand for theft and discriminated against women, but none raised the issue of famine.

The Sudanese famine of 1986–88 has yet more ironies in store. There was no drought, and the Nile floods of 1988 caused little agricultural damage. During that year the government authorized the export of 250,000 tons of grain—exactly one ton for each person estimated to have perished from famine.

This does not refute Professor Sen's point. When a country is divided by a civil war, especially when that division has racial and religious dimensions, the domain of the free press and parliamentary opposition is greatly restricted. Civilians on the "other side" do not qualify for the rights of citizens. The tragedies of Sudan must remain in mind as an object lesson of the failures that may accompany political pluralism.

There are two basic patterns of famine in Africa, one characterized by drought and neglect, and the other by government counter-insurgency measures against rural insurrections. Peace and political accountability would consign such famines to history. Political changes that are sweeping away authoritarian governments give cause for optimism, but other trends on the continent, toward the development of deeply divided and militarized

* Amartya Sen, "Individual Freedom as a Social Commitment," *New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1990, p. 50.

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societies, suggest that African famine will not be conquered soon.

Famines of Drought and Neglect

A simple but widely held belief is that drought leads to production failures, which in turn lead to famine. This belief is often combined with analyses that lay blame on overpopulation, ecological imbalances, inappropriate development policies, or impoverishment by colonialism and neocolonialism. There is an important germ of truth in this: repeated rainfall failure, combined with a chronic decline in soil productivity, undoubtedly played a role in famines such as that which struck the west African Sahel in 1970–73 and again in 1983–85.

Both capitalist and state "socialist" governments have been criticized for following policies that increase rural poverty. Socialist governments have been castigated for promoting collectivization and restricting private trade; capitalist governments for turning over smallholdings and pasture to commercial plantations and for promoting cash crops and migrant labor at the expense of food production. Policy failures have combined with climatic vicissitudes and ecological degradation to create Africa's agrarian crisis.

But while intense agrarian crisis has on occasion caused famine, such famines are usually mild and cause relatively few deaths. The Sahelian famine of the early 1970s is the classic example of this; there is no evidence to show that during the peak period of hunger, there were any additional deaths at all compared to normal. Such famines are so mild because rural people in drought-prone areas have developed strategies to cope with the stresses of drought, which include time-honored activities such as gathering wild fruits and grass seeds and more recently adopted ones such as migrating to towns and richer rural areas in search of paid employment. Following these strategies unobstructed, rural people are remarkably effective in avoiding destitution and starvation.

Such "survival strategies" contribute far more to survival than does food relief. The huge relief operation for the drought-famine of 1984–5 in western Sudan provided, on average, no more than 10 percent of the diet of famine-stricken villagers; the remainder was provided by the "victims' " own efforts.

Smallholder farmers and pastoralists are economically astute and "risk averse." They tend to diversify as much as possible, growing different crops, herding animals, and following other activities to earn money in the slack season. Vulnerability to famine is, to a large extent, a result of the stripping away of these options. The single greatest restriction comes with loss of land. Overnight, a resourceful farmer-herder-gatherer may be reduced to a laborer.

Government policies of land expropriation and restriction of movement have contributed to numerous famines in Africa whose immediate cause appears to be drought. In these famines, many fewer people die than media accounts and United Nations estimates would have us believe, and only a small minority of those deaths are brought on by starvation. Most deaths are caused by epidemic disease, either acting in concert with undernutrition or—more often—simply carrying away the hungry and well-nourished alike. Starvation is frequently unknown.

Preventing Drought Famines

A final point about drought famines is that they are remarkably easy for a government to prevent. Prompt action by the state to provide guaranteed employment, to control the market price of food, and to provide free relief to the most vulnerable (such as the old and infirm) can prevent any undue distress. In the four decades since independence, India has succeeded in preventing a succession of major harvest failures from developing into famines by the use of such interventions. Over the past century, the Indian government has developed a sophisticated famine prevention system, in the form of the colonial "famine codes" and modern "scarcity manuals." Botswana and Cape Verde are two African countries that have implemented similar famine-prevention systems, which have met with remarkable success despite food shortfalls that are, relatively speaking, far greater than those in Ethiopia or Sudan.

If the means of famine prevention are so well known, why do famines remain so common? One reason is that prevention programs need to be triggered.

During the Raj, the Indian famine codes

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included a complex "intelligence system"; district officers monitored rainfall food prices and other "premonitory signs and symptoms of distress." In Africa today these indicators are supplemented by satellite imagery and computer models and called "early warning systems," and Western donors lavish millions of dollars on them. However, for four decades there has been no need for such technological sophistication in India, because the same task is performed by the press and the parliamentary system. Indian farmers are able to alert the government to impending scarcity through the press and the local member of parliament more rapidly than any technologically based system. More important, the channels of communication also act as the trigger. If the member of parliament fails to act, he or she will be certain to lose popular support—by being subjected to immediate ridicule in the media and loss of votes at the next election.

The link between a free press and famine prevention is now widely recognized. The press plays two roles: it provides information and it brings political pressure to bear. However, there are three prerequisites. First, journalists and editors must be well informed and responsible. Media everywhere are prone to exaggeration and simplification. Western media coverage of famines is both more extreme and more simplified than in India. It has only one battle cry: mass starvation is imminent and Western charity is urgently needed. In fact, in the majority of cases, starvation is unlikely and massive international food relief is far from the best response.

Second, the free press must be accompanied by wider civil and political freedoms. If civil action and protest are illegal, press coverage of impending famine will not galvanize a government to action.

Third, famine must be a political issue. Historically, official inaction over famine has contributed to the fall of governments. This is now less common. One reason is that the internationalization of responsibility for famine relief has developed together with a depoliticized portrayal of famine by the Western media and relief agencies.

War Famines

War has been the most important cause of famine in Africa in the last ten years, usually fought by authoritarian governments against rural insurgents. Some of the governments have been avowedly socialist (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola) and others capitalist (Sudan, Somalia, Liberia); the common theme is struggle for control of state power.

These wars have created a different kind of famine, characterized by mass movements of people in extreme distress and with little purpose. Not only have these refugees lost their homes, they have lost that remnant of control over their lives that is so critical to the success of "survival strategies" in peacetime famines.

Faced with rural insurgencies, African governments resort to classic counter-insurgency strategies with a high level of indiscriminate brutality. The array of methods includes military offensives against rebel strongholds, relocation of the population, restrictions on movement and trade, and sponsorship of local groups hostile to the insurgents.

In northern Ethiopia in the early 1980s, a combination of these strategies was instrumental in creating famine. In each year from 1980 to 1983, there were harvest surpluses in certain parts of northern Ethiopia, but army offensives into areas held by the rebel Tigrayan People's Liberation Front destroyed much. Tight restrictions in contested areas made it impossible for anyone to migrate to find work or for small merchants to trade food to needy areas, while the aerial bombardment of markets in rebel-held areas brought commerce to a halt there, too. Thus severe famine developed in the first months of 1983, although widespread drought was not to strike until six months later.

The Sudanese government used a different military strategy after the outbreak of the war in the south in 1983. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) drew its support primarily from the Dinka ethnic group; the government armed neighboring groups and encouraged them to attack Dinka villages. These militias became intoxicated with plunder and racial hatred and carried the attacks through with near-genocidal ferocity. A huge swath of Dinka countryside was burned, and

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whole herds of cattle stolen. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed, and many children dragged off into slavery. The survivors were forced to go to local garrison towns for sustenance, and from there north to where work and charity might be available—right through the militias' territory. There, the displaced people were robbed and prevented from gathering wild foods while the army garrisons held up internationally donated food relief. Food aid stood neglected for two years in railway sidings, while less than a mile away the people for whom it was intended starved to death. Outright starvation became common and death rates reached levels sixty times as high as those recorded in the same area during the drought-famine of 1984–85. The Dinka did not starve—they were starved.

Variations on these forms of warfare have been found in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Uganda, and Mali. But all have three things in common. One is that they are fought in fragile rural economies, without adequate assistance given to the dislocated population. This means that even if military commanders do not intend to create famine, that is often the result of their actions.

The second is that famine is often created deliberately. African military strategists have learned that one of the most effective weapons in their arsenal is starvation, which is more commonly used to force people to submit than to kill them.

Finally, the present system of nation-state sovereignty means that only one side in a civil war, namely the recognized government, is eligible for relief from the U.N. agencies and most bilateral donors. Whole populations can therefore fall outside the reach of large-scale international aid.

Feeding Wars

Western humanitarian agencies are often enrolled as unwitting partners in the military strategy of "starvation or submission." One of the commonest types of relief program is the feeding of people forcibly displaced by military action. What looks like a humanitarian feeding center to a foreign agency may be the center of a pacification campaign to an army commander and a concentration camp to a local villager. Military strategists often plan their counterinsurgency campaigns knowing that relief supplies will be provided for displaced civilians, and that the presence of relief agencies will dispel accusations of deliberate starvation.

In countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique, relief agencies have found themselves playing a strategic military role, helping a government army to secure contested areas. In doing so they may be providing a 10 percent contribution to rural people's survival, but they are also abetting the destruction of much of the other 90 percent. Garrison-based relief centers are often the site of flagrant abuses such as the diversion of food aid to militia forces or the use of food distributions as a "bait" to lure villagers for involuntary relocation. Relief agencies are obliged to turn a blind eye to these abuses if they wish to be allowed to continue their programs.

The acute ethical dilemma of whether to continue under such circumstances or to place human rights conditions on humanitarian aid has rarely been faced.

Transitions

Two related and hopeful trends in contemporary African politics promise to have a profound impact on famine prevention. One is the reshuffling that has accompanied the ending of the cold war. Former Soviet clients have been required to seek peace, and governments supported by the United States and France have found themselves without a patron prepared to indulge their autocratic ways. Simultaneously, an upsurge in popular discontent at single-party and military regimes has led to widespread concessions of civil and political liberties.

The ending of civil wars and the transition to more democratic politics would appear to remove the two main obstacles to preventing famine. They are certainly giant strides in the right direction, but caution is in order. It is quite possible that the passing of cold-war-sponsored authoritarian regimes will merely mean that we are faced with a new kind of African famine. There are three elements that will be important in shaping future famines:

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militarization, "hidden" economies, and the changing role of Western intervention.

Militarization

There is a third trend in contemporary Africa, manifest in Liberia and Somalia: toward chaos. This is part of a wider phenomenon, which is the militarization of African societies. Access to modern firearms is cheap and unregulated.

A common pattern of conflict centers on competition for resources. Local warfare over wells, pasture, and arable land has long been a feature of rural Africa, sharpened recently because of the shrinkage of the natural resource base caused by ecological degradation. The murderous power of modern firearms allows conflicts that previously had a limited impact to escalate into large-scale massacres.

The resources that are being fought over are the very fundamentals of rural life. The losers are impoverished and unable to reestablish themselves by peaceable means. The victor will be anxious to ensure that the vanquished do not have the ability to reorganize and strike back, and may therefore wreak destruction on villages and herds beyond what is required to gain control of the disputed resources. Losing a local war is tantamount to suffering famine.

Local conflicts interact with national politics in a variety of ways. Ethnically based irregular armies are the basis for the warlordism of Chadian politics. In Sudan, the government has manipulated local conflicts and used ethnically-based militias as a strategy in a wider civil war. This was leading to a situation in which political parties were arming partisan militias as a safeguard against their rivals' seizing absolute power. Thus, a vigorous pluralist civil society in the capital coexisted with rural violence, civil war, and resulting famine.

Predatory forms of commerce, driven by shrinking markets and in turn causing impoverishment and famine, are also becoming common. The best example is the livestock market. In a famine, animal prices fall; the owners sell cheap and middlemen and merchants gain by transporting the animals to regions where prices are high or else keeping them for the price rebound when the famine abates. These relations can become crystallized into asset-stripping practices, oiled by the threat or exercise of violence, that impoverish the many to the advantage of the few. Financing cattle raiding is a logical enterprise for a livestock merchant in a capricious market.

Africa's "Hidden" Economies

Many accounts of the food crisis in Africa are introduced with a litany of dismal statistics about the economic decline of the continent. Though the poverty is real, the statistics are misleading, because they fail to capture a range of significant economic activities. These activities are generally the "coping strategies" of the rich, and exist in a vibrant unmeasured economy.

During the late 1980s, Somalia's per capita GNP plummeted to such a level that economic analyses predicted mass starvation. This did not happen: in fact, according to such indicators as sales of gasoline, the economy was prospering. However, the expanding sectors of the economy were largely unmeasured. These included remittances from Somalis working abroad; the smuggling of ivory, gems and arms; wealth in livestock; and the diversion of foreign aid. These economic activities were largely controlled by rich people with access to government office.

In Sudan, the late 1980s did see a descent into famine; but similar "coping strategies" cushioned the rich. While the official economy crashed and the official external debt rose to $14 billion, private citizens prospered. During this period about $10 billion was exported in unrecorded capital flight, and a similar amount was invested abroad by Sudanese expatriates. Overall, Sudan is therefore not a debtor nation at all, and if unrecorded incomes are counted it is probably a middle-income country. This explains why the richer suburbs of Khartoum are filled with houses that would not be out of place in Riyadh. It does not explain why the poor are suffering famine.

Three factors provide the key to the successful adjustment of the rich to Africa's economic crisis: access to foreign exchange; ability to acquire licenses, permits, and exceptions; and ownership of modern firearms. If the

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elite's monopoly of these is threatened, their rapid adjustments spells disaster for the poor.

For example, in Sudan in August 1990, the fear of a simultaneous cut-off in remittances from the Gulf and withdrawal of Saudi and U.S. economic support (all because of the government's support for Iraq) led to a crisis of confidence in the Sudanese pound. The middle classes rushed to convert their currency into foreign exchange or into essential items such as food. Combined with a fear of an imminent harvest failure, the result was a six-fold increase in the price of basic grains, causing instant famine among the poor.

Western Interventions

Increasingly, an explicitly humanitarian agenda informs Western policy towards Africa. This follows from the high profile given to famine relief in the media, and the continent's economic decline, with a commensurate decrease in investment and development aid. This involvement has altered the relationship of African governments to their citizens and to their overseas donors.

Since the embarrassment suffered by Western governments during Christmas 1984, when they were caught without an excuse for having failed to provide adequate relief to Ethiopia during the previous two years, Western politicians will never refuse to advocate more humanitarian aid to Africa. Even when governments have good reason for withholding humanitarian aid or attaching strict conditions to it, their representatives shy away from admitting that they are "playing politics." The truism that "a starving child knows no politics" is equated with the manifestly false statement that blindness to political realities is a precondition for feeding that child. If humanitarian agencies and Western donors refuse to play politics, tyrants such as Colonel Mengistu of Ethiopia are more than happy to take advantage of this naiveté.

Ethiopia is the classic example. During Mengistu's fourteen-year rule, as he steered his country into a series of disasters of extraordinary proportions, Western aid rose tenfold. Despite the fact that most famine victims were beyond the reach of government-based distribution programs in 1985, the government and agencies working alongside it received 90 percent of the resources; those working on the rebel side received 10 percent. The famine period and its aftermath allowed the army to make important territorial gains in the north. Meanwhile, relief became the government's largest source of foreign currency, the artificially high exchange rate enabled the government to levy a tax of at least 50 percent on all currency transactions for famine relief programs, and the "acceptable" rate of food aid diversion of 5 percent allowed the military establishment to be fed. While providing the last 10 percent to the victims the aid provided rather more to the government that was the main cause of their suffering.

This is, of course, an extreme example of the inadvertent propping up of a heinous regime from the best humanitarian motives. But Western aid budgets have a disproportionate importance for recipient governments throughout the continent. The liquidity of central banks, the payment of officials' salaries, even the survival of regimes, has long depended on the continued flow of concessionary finance. Small wonder that governments are more responsive to their paymasters than to their electorates. Through aid, the people of an African country surrender a crucial element in their sovereignty: the accountability of government to its taxpayers.

For relief aid, most donors demand only a minimum of accountability. The important thing is that money for relief be spent. Its true impact is very rarely assessed—the commissions of inquiry that follow every food emergency in India are never to be found in Africa.

When donors speak of a "sovereign country," they mean a sovereign government. Most African governments know that the flow of humanitarian aid will continue unabated because of the domestic politics of the donor countries. Even Sudan, which has broken most of the rules by repeatedly defaulting on its debts and supporting Saddam Hussein in the bargain, still receives massive foreign aid. In most cases, lip service to concepts currently fashionable in the aid community is all that is required to keep the aid flowing.

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Donors potentially have enormous leverage, through threats to cut off aid. Threats can be a highly effective weapon, but they are used rarely and very reluctantly, and never when there is media attention to starving children. Thus unpopular African governments retain an extraordinary freedom of action.

Donors also support relief operations in rebel-controlled areas. These bring benefits to rebel movements, but not on the same scale as governments. These programs are typically smaller than those in government-held areas and more liable to interruption. Most important, however, rebel movements do not control currency rates and rarely transact the exchanges themselves, and so never obtain tax revenue and only occasionally foreign exchange from the programs.

Increasingly, donors are switching to large voluntary organizations to implement their aid programs. This is a concession to the domestic politics of aid: government donations to humanitarian organizations receive good publicity. This trend often makes relief aid less accountable. Voluntary agencies have their own agenda, which usually involves arguing for more aid, and often they are willing to make significant compromises in order to continue their own programs in a country. In addition, they are often considered above criticism by the media. By utilizing voluntary agencies, the donor loses much of its potential leverage.

The significant exceptions occur when voluntary agencies insist on more accountability than the donors have demanded. Humanitarian agencies' initiatives in drawing attention to the famine in southern Sudan, and the government's role in it, is a noteworthy example.

The international system of emergency aid almost always reinforces the authority of those entities called "sovereign states." Moreover, the system transfers accountability from the people (who would be ready to call their government to account) to the donors (who are reluctant to impose conditions). While this system continues, African governments will have an inherent tendency towards authoritarianism, for the simple reason that an authoritarian ruler who avoids offending the donors too much will be able to get away with it.

The "new conditionality" of the Western donors, involving an explicit commitment to democracy and human rights, along with the greater post-Kurdistan willingness of the UN to intervene in cases of contested sovereignty, indicates the possibility of transforming these damaging relationships. However, caution is in order. The United States' cold-war search for client states has turned into a scramble by African governments to find Western patrons. The Western donors' new flexibility does not necessarily entail an even-handed humanitarianism, but may instead lead to a more inflexible enforcement of Western economic and political fashions. The donor-recipient relationship is changing, but the fundamentals have yet to be altered.

New Types of Famine

In the future, the absence of civil wars sponsored by cold-war rivalry is likely to see fewer counterinsurgency famines, and the transition to greater pluralism will create governments more responsive to popular pressure to ameliorate famine. However, there is the prospect of new types of famine. Climatic adversity, poverty, and ecological degradation will leave people vulnerable to famine, as will local violence, either manipulated by governments or simply allowed to grow uncontrollably. Such violence can coexist with pluralist elected governments, and may indeed be fueled by them. The rich may succeed in coping with future economic shocks, but only by making the poor bear the brunt of them; in this case rural famine will coexist with a vigorous unofficial economy, and quite possibly with a pluralist political system.

If Western aid donors maintain their present relationship with African governments, they will not only give disproportionate assistance to those governments relative to suffering people, but will depoliticize famine, and hence help to perpetuate it. There is a bleak but quite possible scenario under which the ruling elites of Africa may be integrated into the Western economies through their ownership of capital while the poor are equally integrated—through being perpetual recipients of international famine relief. □

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Stuart Schear

AIDS IN AFRICA

Life on the African continent has been transformed by the lethal virus that causes AIDS—the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The decade-old AIDS epidemic has already strained the social and economic fabric of African societies, taking an especially heavy toll on women. Even the most optimistic researchers don't expect a vaccine before 1998 at the earliest, leaving prevention as the only tool available to stem the spread of HIV.

The statistics are daunting: the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that one in forty Africans is infected with either HIV-1 or HIV-2, a second AIDS virus that predominates in Western Africa. Among those infected are six million adults and seven hundred fifty thousand children; best estimates suggest that one million Africans have already died of AIDS. In Zaire, which is hardest hit, 6 to 8 percent of the urban population and 3 to 4 percent of the rural population is infected. Eighty to 90 percent of all adult cases in Africa are tied to heterosexual relations and 10 percent to infection by blood transfusion; a tiny fraction are attributable to other causes. The heterosexual nature of AIDS in Africa accounts for the fact that women make up 50 percent of adult cases and that at least half a million children have developed AIDS.

These figures represent only a first wave. The virus often takes ten years to cause recognizable illness, and virtually every asymptomatic HIV carrier will become sick and die. WHO epidemiologists predict that by the year 2000 an additional five million Africans will perish, a total of fourteen million will be infected, and ten million children will have lost at least one parent. Some British epidemiologists go further and project that certain regions of Africa will actually suffer a decrease in population.

The enormity of the epidemic is made clear by these statistics, yet on their own they do not tell how HIV has spread among the people of Africa. The transmission of the virus follows culturally specific patterns of family life and sexual relations, and it travels along the routes of economic migration. Unlike in the West, where the epidemic has primarily affected gay men and intravenous drug users and their sex partners, HIV in Africa is overwhelmingly rooted in the heterosexual mainstream. In some African cultures, men routinely maintain simultaneous familial and sexual relations with several women. Also, many men migrate for months at a time to find work or earn their living by driving long-distance truck routes, and it is customary for these men to avail themselves of prostitutes when away from home. These pre-existing patterns have fostered the spread of HIV both by increasing the numerical likelihood of transmission and by creating a high prevalence of other sexually transmitted diseases. These other infections often produce lesions in the skin and mucous membranes, allowing HIV to move more easily from one person to the next.

If the spread of HIV across Africa is intimately tied to the movement of men, the impact of AIDS on African women is especially dramatic. Grandmothers are raising tens of thousands of grandchildren orphaned by the epidemic; tens of thousands of HIV-positive women face the possibility of infecting their infants through breast-feeding. Women must also cope with HIV-infected men who spurn condoms but insist on continuing sexual relations. These women can't refuse sex with their partners or ask them to practice "safe sex" without placing their domestic security at risk. Conversely, when it becomes apparent to

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a man that one of the women in his life is infected with HIV, he may leave her without support or shelter.

Convincing men to use condoms is key to HIV prevention efforts in Africa. In Zaire and the Ivory Coast, entreprenurialism has succeeded where public education and distribution efforts have not. Subsidized by the United States Agency for International Development, local authorities supply thousands of vendors with condoms, which they sell at affordable prices while making a small profit. The success of this approach in Zaire can be measured by the number of condoms sold, climbing from nine hundred thousand in 1989 to nine million last year. The HIV-related condom campaigns aimed at men are reversing decades of public health practice, which encouraged women to take control of contraceptive decisions.

When prevention fails and illness develops, AIDS is one of the most expensive and labor intensive diseases to treat in the history of medicine. While the urban health care systems of the developed world are overburdened by the costs of battling the disease, the less wealthy nations of Africa must do what they can with an average annual per capita health budget of ten U.S. dollars. In fact, the cost of a single test for determining whether or not an individual is infected with HIV is more than the average African spends on health care in a year. Uganda, for example, provides one nurse for every 12,332 people, one doctor for every 23,000, and one hospital for every 200,000. This means that Africans with AIDS suffer the most brutal excesses of the disease. AZT and other costly medications, which both extend life and moderate the effects of opportunistic infections, are out of reach for almost all Africans. Most never even make it to a hospital, yet the rates of infection are so high and the number of hospital beds so limited that in some cities 80 percent of all the hospitalized patients have AIDS.

The economic fallout is not limited to the cost of health care. The U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank predict that fragile national and local African economies will be dealt a severe blow by the epidemic. By some accounts, the economic impact is already being felt. In the cities of Central Africa, HIV has hit the economic elite particularly hard, killing thousands of professionals in their prime. In Uganda and Tanzania this year, coffee and other cash crops remain unharvested due to an agricultural labor shortage resulting from mounting AIDS deaths. Similarly, the all-important mining industry is suffering an AIDS-related shortage of workers, and one study predicts a three percentage drop of Zambia's and Zaire's share of copper production in the world market by the end of the decade. Some African officials say that close to one-fourth of Africa's work force will be lost by the year 2010. Because the greatest number of AIDS deaths have hit the most economically productive segment of the population, fifteen- to forty-nine-year-olds, the already burdensome ratio of dependent elderly and children to productive adults has become even more imbalanced. Recognizing this threat to weak developing economies, the WHO, World Bank, and the U.S. Agency for International Development have contributed tens of millions of dollars to combat HIV in Africa. In attempting to attract more foreign assistance for the fight against AIDS, African officials find themselves appealing to the economic self-interest of the developed world. Recently, at an international conference on AIDS in Africa, an official from Guinea remarked; "Remember, a sick population will not be able to work, will not be able to pay its debts."

Africa's immediate future is tied inextricably to the effects of HIV. African governments, like most others around the world, responded lethargically to the threat, allowing the virus to gain a foothold and spread. Perhaps some little encouragement can be drawn from the fact that by 1992, every African government had developed a national response to HIV. More than a decade into the epidemic, Dr. Michael Merson, Director of the WHO's Global Programme on AIDS, has warned that while the eighties were the decade of HIV, the nineties promise to be the decade of AIDS. This is particularly true for Africa, and the current plague is simply a foretaste of the calamity to come. □

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Richard L. Sklar

THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM IN AFRICA

The Failure of Economic Statism

In Africa, as elsewhere, the debacle of socialist thought can be attributed to intellectual as well as circumstantial causes. During the colonial era, and for some years thereafter, socialist intellectuals in Africa had routinely identified capitalism as a barrier to social progress and an impediment to the distribution of a fair portion of the world's wealth to African people. By the late 1970s, however, a growing number of specialists and others who were informed about conditions in Africa had concluded that, in fact, the main obstacle to development was economic statism, not capitalism. Yet influential socialists persisted in preaching about the evils of capitalism and the relative merits of statist socialism for promoting development despite compelling evidence to the contrary. One recollection of my own may serve to recall that tedious refrain.

As a visiting professor at the University of Zimbabwe in 1984, I wondered about the espousal of doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism by President Robert Mugabe despite his government's effective use of capitalist institutions and methods of development. It seemed to me that the glaring discrepancy between authoritative pronouncements of an official ideology and the actual practice of responsible officeholders produced cynicism among students at the university. To be sure, it was difficult for them to believe that professions of political faith by national leaders should be taken seriously. In its Marxist-Leninist form, socialism, in Zimbabwe as elsewhere, was relevant only to the retention of power by the leaders of a dominant political party; it was plainly unrelated to either economic development or any increase of meaningful freedom for the people.

Until the latter 1970s, many professing socialists in Africa believed fervently in collectivist strategies of capital accumulation. Thereafter, China's abandonment of collectivized agriculture in favor of a "household responsibility system," coupled with Vietnam's inexorable economic decline under classical Leninist leadership, stimulated growing doubts in Africa about the efficacy of socialist methods. Clearly, the circumstantial, or "objective," barriers to collectivist strategies of economic development were insuperable. Specifically, exponential population growth and the escalation of prices for essential imports created needs for agricultural production that were far greater than collectivized and regimented labor could ever fulfill. Moreover, the African peasantries were emphatically more averse to collectivization than had been the case with peasantries in China and North Vietnam during the 1950s, when collectivization was accomplished in those countries.

By the end of the 1980s, when Leninist one-party rule collapsed in Europe, its economic rationale for Africa had entirely disappeared. The avowedly Marxist-Leninist regimes of Angola, Benin, Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe had become receptive to the logic of capitalist development long before their leaders finally embraced multiparty democracy, in each case between

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1989 and 1991. Their basic economic practices were ideologically indistinguishable from those of other African regimes, some of which espoused socialism while others were either candidly capitalist or noncommittal. During three postcolonial decades, there has been but one significant socialist experiment in Africa, namely that of Tanzania, which is virtually untainted by Marxism-Leninism. The importance of Tanzania's experience with socialist thought and practice, for both Africa and the world at large, is greatly enhanced by the fact that its ideological credentials were not directly discredited by the debacle of Marxism-Leninism in Europe. What are the lessons of Tanzania for students of socialism and development?

The Tanzanian experiment represents an attempt to build socialism in a society of rural dwellers with the expectation that it would remain predominantly rural and agricultural "for a long time to come." As President Julius K. Nyerere declared in 1967, "It is therefore the villages which must be made into places where people live a good life; it is in the rural areas that people must be able to find their material well-being and their satisfactions."[1] Although Nyerere and his associates did intend to develop the country's industrial potential, they also valued agricultural work highly as a way of life for modern Africans; hence, they resolved that industrial development would not be pursued at the expense of the peasantry. Their brave attempt to build rural socialism as an end in itself, which they sustained for the better part of two decades, represents the most significant such effort in modern history. The story of its failure, manifest in agricultural stagnation and a corresponding decline in the living standards of the peasantry, has been exhaustively chronicled by supporters and opponents alike. Pending the balanced judgments of historians, students of development in present-day Africa need to formulate tentative conclusions for the immediate guidance of planners and public officials.

One such conclusion is that rural socialism is unlikely to be supported by the peasantry; its pursuit is incompatible with an efficient system of incentives to produce food and fiber for urban dwellers and sale abroad. Cogent studies of the Tanzanian experience indicate that peasant resistance to both collectivization and repugnant price regulation was largely responsible for the disappointing performance of agriculture. Rural socialism appears to be a utopian conception that leads to disaster and disillusionment.

A related lesson, one that arises from Tanzania's increasing need to import food and other products that could be produced just as well at home, is the probability that a socialist strategy of development for an agrarian society will result in that society's degrading dependence on foreign patrons. By the latter 1970s, Tanzania had become dependent on foreign aid for some two-thirds of its domestic investment. Dependence on the paternalistic donor community for basic needs became a permanent feature of national economic life. The discrepancy between that reality and the official ethos of self-reliance took its toll on the regime's morale. As in Zimbabwe, the lack of correspondence between official professions of political faith and actual practice inevitably undermined the credibility and legitimacy of national leaders.

Yet another lesson to be learned from Tanzania's experience grows out of the demonstrable incompatibility of democratic participation with the institution of a one-party state. On the one hand, Nyerere's regime was relatively liberal for a doctrinaire one-party state—for example, ideological tests for party membership, adopted in principle, were never fully implemented, and ideological purges of the party were scorned by Nyerere himself and prevented. On the other hand, trade unions, cooperative societies, and the media were tightly controlled by the regime; it became increasingly difficult for critics of the leadership to rise within the party. In the name of socialism, the paternalistic government became a fetter on the forces of intellectual and cultural development as well as economic production.

Now that the ideals of rural socialism grow ever more remote from the realities of capitalistic economic reconstruction in Tanzania, the question of its legacy for the emergent social order is being pondered, mainly by

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sympathetic intellectuals. One such observer, namely Dean E. McHenry, Jr., has recently suggested that many of the goals of socialism have become part and parcel of the national culture, and that "they are likely to affect the nature of Tanzanian society no matter what form its polity and economy take."[2] Be that as it may, we should still bear in mind that the initial goals of Nyerere's socialist program were political as well as economic and social. His original defense of a one-party state was predicated on the belief that its establishment would actually extend and strengthen democratic participation and choice under conditions obtaining in the aftermath of independence. However, the political institutions devised by Tanzanian socialists, ostensibly to promote democratic participation in the processes of government, do not appear to have had that effect or to have earned the approval of the people. The challenge of political reconstruction today confronts a generation of intellectuals for whom socialism is, at best, an ambiguous ideal.

In fact, the baton of socialist leadership in Africa has been passed from Tanzania to South Africa, where socialism is still ardently espoused by political organizations that have arrived at the brink of a historic victory in their struggle for equal political rights for all citizens. Among these organizations, the South African Communist party (SACP) is foremost as a center for intellectuals who wish to relate socialist thought to practical politics.

Since 1969, the Communist party has been an organic ally of the African National Congress (ANC), which means that all Communist party members also belong to the ANC and support its policies. Within the Congress, Communists and non-Communists alike affirm the precept that democracy as a political goal takes precedence over "socialism," which they both identify as a more remote objective. Meanwhile, the ANC has firmly rejected two proposed deviations from the liberationist line favored by communists for many years. First, during the 1970s, the popular cultural/political movement known as "black consciousness" was often criticized by ANC commentators as a form of "racial chauvinism" because leaders of that movement were averse to collaboration with white opponents of the apartheid system. Black Consciousness had revived the spirit of "Africanism," the clarion call of a previous political generation for racial self-reliance. Second, during the early 1980s, the ANC repudiated the strategy of revolutionary trade unionism as an "ultra-leftist" deviation from its own, more complex and many-sided approach. Leading deviationists were expelled from the Congress. These positions, reaffirmed by the ANC from time to time during the past two decades, have served to solidify the ANC-SACP alliance.

While many members of the ANC do have pronounced socialist sympathies, the Congress, itself, is unequivocally nondoctrinaire in principle. Despite the fact that ANC leaders and their advisors frequently advert to the nationalization of industry as a prospective element of economic policy by an ANC-controlled government, they also declare, with increasing frequency and evident sincerity, that socialistic methods would not be implemented at the expense of economic efficiency. Moreover, the idea of nationalization is rarely mentioned without reference to two related issues: first of all, the excessively high concentration of stock ownership in South Africa—six conglomerates are reported to own more than 80 percent of the capitalized equity quoted on the Johannesburg stock exchange. The logical remedy for this condition is not government ownership but more widely dispersed private ownership.

The second issue relates to proposals for privatization of existing state corporations, such as the Energy Supply Commission, the Iron and Steel Corporation, and the Arms Corporation. Many blacks oppose privatization for reasons that are unrelated to socialist ideology. They are simply wary of white schemes to retain economic power by means of privatization now that political power is about to be shared. Their opposition would probably dissolve in the face of evidence that privatization could free up public funds for expenditures on social services for the truly needy.

For its part, the Communist party also espouses pragmatic economic policies, but they are predicated on doctrinal faith in the future of

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its version of socialism. Many Communists are known to question the durability of their party's organic linkage with the ANC; some of them appear to believe that the time for separate political action will soon arrive. Communists, generally, subscribe to the Marxist doctrine that a mature working class will tend to unite behind a political party dedicated to the cause of socialism. From that standpoint, subordination of the working class to the political leadership of a "bourgeois" party, such as the ANC, can only be a temporary condition.

Unlike communists, most democratic socialists in today's world do not favor the creation of specifically labor parties to represent the political interests of workers. Realistically, they acknowledge that wage and salary workers support various political causes and parties. Such causes often include these: a free market for labor, free trade unions, free collective bargaining, internal union democracy, worker participation in the making of managerial-type decisions, and union representation on the boards of enterprises. In some countries, there are historic ties between the major working class organizations and labor parties. But this is not the case in South Africa or, for that matter, anywhere else in Africa. Any attempt by communist intellectuals to launch a labor party, apart from the ANC, in South Africa would probably be politically suicidal.

Before its congress of December 1991, the SACP appeared to contemplate a fundamental ideological shift from Leninism to democratic socialism, in keeping with the revised views of its outgoing secretary general, Joe Slovo. However, the four-hundred-plus delegates voted decisively to reaffirm the party's Leninist orientation and to expunge the word "democratic" from a proposal to pursue the goal of a "democratic socialist society." Although the terminology is essentially symbolic, rather than practical, it does indicate that the SACP cannot now be identified as a party of democratic socialism.

In addition to the Communist party, various other political groups in South Africa advocate socialistic programs. Three of them, namely the Azanian People's Organization, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and the Cape Action League are conspicuously active in the political arena. All three are associated with a revolutionary doctrine known as "racial capitalism," which teaches that racism in South Africa cannot be abolished apart from the simultaneous abolition of capitalism. Their distrust of compromise, halfway measures, and gradual reform stems from the conviction of those associated with these groups that white supremacy is being renovated and re-established in new forms. Since they routinely reduce social issues to race-class formulations, I shall identify them as "racial socialists." Some of them are anti-Stalinist communists, typically Trotskyists, who nonetheless combine Marxism with the maxim of non-European unity. Alert to the pitfalls of racial populism, they strive doggedly to maintain their specifically socialist political identities. However, mainstream racial socialists are more likely to compromise their beliefs in favor of populist reforms couched in anticapitalist rhetoric rather than formulate pragmatic/democratic socialist alternatives.

It emerges that no major political organization in South Africa today upholds democratic socialism as its ideal. The Communist party might have seized that opportunity in December 1991, but refused to do so. Barring a spectacular electoral triumph by either Leninist or racial socialists or an improbable combination of both, postapartheid South Africa may be expected to march in step with the rest of capitalist Africa. Indeed, South African capitalism will probably expand and prosper as the main engine of economic growth for the vast Southern African region.

Whither socialism? The challenges of development in Sub-Saharan Africa are daunting. Its unprecedented rate of population growth, now 3.2 percent a year, imposes an immense burden on the region's forty-seven national economies. By the year 2020, the population of Sub-Saharan Africa will exceed one billion people, double its present size. Urban dwellers will constitute nearly 50 percent of the total; the work force will be more than twice as large as it is today. Survival at a tolerable standard of living for most people, without catastrophic episodes of social destruction, will depend on

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the ability of Africans to produce goods and services for over a billion souls.

Today, it is not unusual for statisticians to estimate unemployment of the work force in most African states to be in the vicinity of 40 percent. Increasingly, goods and services required to sustain life for these people and their families are being produced in the so-called informal or unregulated sectors of national economies. Janet MacGaffey observes that "the real economies of African countries" are mixtures of formal, or recorded, and informal, unrecorded, economic activities.[3] In Africa, as elsewhere, the real economy is primarily capitalist, regardless of the incumbent government's particular ideological preference. In the words of Hernando de Soto, reflecting on the experience of Peru, capitalism from below—manifest in the actions and ideas of poor people—is "the invisible revolution in the Third World."[4] De Soto's formulation captures the reality of mass action in Africa today.

Not only will a majority of African workers continue to earn their incomes in the "informal" and unregulated sectors of national and regional economies, but formal-sector firms also depend on these irregulars (informal-sector workers) of capitalist enterprise to buy their products and supply many of their immediate needs. Indeed, the growing symbiotic relationship between formal-sector demand and informal-sector supply is a fundamental fact of economic life in African countries.

Whither socialism in the face of a capitalist revolution from below combined with national economic policies that favor entrepreneurship and foreign investment to the greatest possible degree? African socialist regimes have failed to solve the problem of insufficient personal incentives to produce surplus wealth for public purposes. The economic systems they fostered are demonstrably unsuitable for countries at early or intermediate stages of industrial development. If socialism has a future in Africa it is unrelated to the imperatives of economic development. The sole rationale for socialism in Africa is a moral impulse toward social justice. Although socialism has not been a serious alternative to capitalism from the standpoint of economic efficiency, its survival in ideological form may signify the eventual evolution of contemporary capitalism and socialism jointly into a more advanced form of economic organization, one that remains to be discovered by social scientists.

For socialism to regain its lost credibility in Africa, and elsewhere in the world, its damaged intellectual foundations will have to be reconstructed on basic principles of social justice. These would include the following ideals: fairness in the distribution of both resources and wealth, reasonably equal opportunity for everyone to live in dignity and accomplish personal goals, and separation of private wealth from privileged access to public office and authority without detriment to the political rights of individuals. In short, socialist values for the future should be so formulated as to be congruent with the values of democracy. This approach has been adopted as a matter of course by most trade unionists in all parts of the world.

In Africa, trade unions have been in the forefront of struggles for democracy. For example, in South Africa, black workers fought for, and won, the right to strike, organize, and have their unions registered as bargaining agents during the 1970s. Their contributions to the abolition of apartheid and democratization have been second to no other segment of the liberation movement. Socialists are prominent as leaders and organizers of the predominantly black trade unions; many of them also support the political objectives of the ANC and other political organizations. The great majority of them have also stood for internal union democracy and the independence of trade unions from external political control. For example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions supports the ANC politically, but it is fully autonomous in the sphere of industrial relations. This principle, shared by unionists of Marxist and non-Marxist persuasion alike, has done more for the democratic credibility of socialism in South Africa than all the democratic protestations of doctrinaire socialists in the movement against apartheid. In South Africa today, the independent and democratic trade union movement is the

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principal, if not the only, significant linkage between socialist thought and the practice of economic development.

Similar observations would elicit even fewer objections in relation to the rest of Africa, where socialist intellectuals are less influential than they are in South Africa. In most African countries, socialist intellectuals are respected by the labor movement. So long as they are not anticapitalist, they will be able to add principles of social democracy to the normally democratic policies of the trade unions. This qualification, "not anticapitalist," is crucial to the survival of socialism as an invigorating current within the mainstream of African social thought. Despite their legitimacy as associational interest groups in pluralist democracies, trade unions in all African countries are still compelled to fight tooth and nail for the basic rights of labor. Their ability to secure such rights (including the right to strike, recruit members without hindrance, and bargain collectively with employers) varies directly with the realism they manifest in relationships with business organizations and governmental authorities. They cannot afford to be diverted from the course of pragmatic realism by sectarians.

The main external threat to free and vigorous trade unionism in Africa is posed by technocrats who believe that organized labor is the enemy of capitalist economic reform. As shown by the example of Tanzania and many other countries, such reforms are indispensable. Invariably they require sacrifices by salary and wage earners in the regulated sectors of national economies. Naturally, it has been difficult to enlist the support of free trade unions for such programs. Consequently, those who formulate and implement free-market reform policies rarely reach out to the labor movement. For example, no planning agency is more deeply involved in African economic reform than the World Bank. Yet there is nary a word on organized labor in its current blueprint for African economic development,[5] and little, if anything, more in the entire series of reports on African development issued by the World Bank over the course of a decade.

Paradoxically, the World Bank is deeply committed to the promotion of democracy in Africa on the ground that leading principles of democratic government, such as accountability of officials for their actions, public availability of basic information, and institutional pluralism, serve to facilitate economic development. It may be necessary to remind those who advocate democracy as a correlate of capitalism that capitalism without free trade unionism is incompatible with democracy. In other words, purist theories of capitalism that disregard the basic rights of labor are just as unrealistic as the abstract theories of pure socialists who disparage the vital contributions of capitalists.

The importance of working-class struggles for constitutional government and democracy in Africa should be fully appreciated. For example, in Namibia, the nationwide strike in 1971 by cruelly exploited contract workers led to South Africa's concession of Namibia's right to determine its own political future. Recently, in numerous African countries, from Benin and Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa to Zambia in East-Central Africa, trade unions have made crucial contributions to successful campaigns for free elections. Among these democratic episodes, none has been more dramatic than Frederick Chiluba's landslide victory over Kenneth Kaunda in the Zambian presidential election of October 1991. The difference between them on the paramount issue of the day could not have been more pronounced: Chiluba, former chairman of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, stands for capitalism, multiparty electoral competition, and free trade unions; Kaunda, whose dislike of capitalism is proverbial, believes in the subordination of organized labor to a sole legal party. His well-intentioned but inept regime, frozen in place by the conversion of Zambia into a one-party state in 1972, reduced a potentially prosperous country to impoverishment because Zambians were not free to vote for a change of course. There is no valid excuse for Zambia's being worse off than its neighbor, Zimbabwe, which endured several years of warfare before the termination of white minority rule, and has no wealth-producing natural resource comparable to Zambia's great economic asset, a copper mining industry that was second to none among

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copper exporting countries when Zambia became independent in 1964.

A potentially feasible, but politically retrograde, alternative to free trade unionism is dictatorship with capitalism in the name of socialism, a form of political economy exemplified today by China and its regional nemesis, Vietnam. From time to time, this perversion of both capitalism and socialism has been approximated in African countries, including Benin and Zambia, among others. In all such cases, the inevitable results have been intellectual confusion, political demoralization, and general disillusionment with socialist ideals. Today realists of all ideological persuasions acknowledge the existence of a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and democracy in Africa. Among them, thinkers in the socialist tradition bear a special obligation to advance the economic and moral merits of distributive justice as a principle of democratic public policy.

The present disrepute of authoritarian versions of socialism affords a remarkable opportunity for socialists to break away from irrelevant dogmas that marginalize the contributions of socialist thought to economic development. Obsolete theories of revolutionary class struggle and doctrinaire espousal of the necessity for choice between capitalism and socialism only obscure the realities of class collaboration and potentially liberating mixtures of capitalist and socialist thought. Socialist thinkers who combine ideas from these rival, yet complementary, traditions could recover some of their lost credibility while the theoreticians of capitalism are dizzy with success.

Notes

[1] Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 273.

[2] Dean E. McHenry, Jr., "Are Pragmatism and Vision Mutually Exclusive? The Place of *Ujamaa* in Tanzania's Future," paper delivered at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 1991.

[3] Janet MacGaffey, "The Need for a New Approach to the Real Economies of African Countries," *Beyond Autocracy in Africa*, The Carter Center of Emory University (Atlanta, Ga.: 1989), pp. 132–136.

[4] Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (Harper & Row, 1989).

[5] The World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington, D.C., 1989).

Bogdan Denitch Comments

It may seem churlish or nitpicking to write a critical comment on "The Future of Socialism in Africa"—especially since I agree with most of Richard L. Sklar's admirable article. He is not only right on the mark, but he is often so without being obvious. Yet there is one important point that is not evident—and is problematic—in his analysis, and that concerns his use of the word "socialism."

Many authoritarian one-party regimes in sub-Saharan Africa claimed, in one way or another, to be "socialist." In fact, their sources of inspiration were quite varied. Most were not inspired by Marxist-Leninist models, and graduates of Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University didn't play all that decisive a role in determining the paths taken by African countries. Some of them accepted Soviet advisers and arms, but over and again this has been shown to be a non-ideological matter.

Trying to play cold war superpowers off each other to obtain the maximum for one's country was a minor political art form throughout the third world, and especially in Africa between the 1960s and 1980s. Take the case of Somalia, as seen through cold war categories. Within a few years this country went from being a Soviet strategic stronghold poised to close the Red Sea or to expand toward Ethiopia, Kenya, or even Sudan, to being a firm, reliable American ally, worthy of aid. All with no visible change in personnel or style of government. It is not an isolated example.

The intellectual elites who came to power in Africa, often in alliance with the military, in the name of "socialism" had diverse inspirations. Some were indeed influenced by Marxism or communism as a result of stays in Paris or London—or even the United States—as well as Moscow. Some were

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products of the London School of Economics—an institution that is responsible for more third world "socialist" experiments than is generally recognized. Some were activated by the radical, Marxist-inspired Pan-Africanism found in the writings of George Padmore and C.L.R. James. And still others came from left Catholic or Protestant traditions. None were particularly concerned with democracy; all were urgently preoccupied by poverty, then called underdevelopment. If there was a Bible in the 1960s, it was Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth*. The message of that all-too-influential book was quite simple: to achieve a developmental breakthrough, all economic resources had to be concentrated in the hands of the modernizing state.

In primarily agrarian societies, this meant the relentless extraction of surpluses from the countryside and the peasantry in favor of the cities and industry. Practically speaking, this demanded war on the independent peasantry, something pursued in a variety of ways, including wholesale collectivization in some places and concentrating peasants in new villages and settlements in others. Most common was fixing prices of agricultural produce impossibly low so as to provide cheap food for the cities. The consequence, not surprisingly, was a catastrophic fall in agricultural production and an ever-increasing dependence on outside aid.

Obviously, such an assault on the countryside and the peasantry made combining democracy with development impossible. On the contrary: a statist and antidemocratic model was pursued. It had to be because the war was against the vast majority of the population, which was rural. The model didn't cater to the interests of the tiny industrial working classes. It rested on the new political and military class or the politocracy. By "politocracy" I mean a class that dominates the economy and society by means of its control of a state that seeks, directly, to control the economy and society.

Now, call such a system whatever you like, but it has nothing in common with any known socialist tradition. It has nothing in common with Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Luxemburg. Or with Lenin and Trotsky, for that matter. Even Stalin—to whom I would also refuse the title "socialist"—at least claimed to rule in the name of the industrial proletariat. No such claim was made by most African regimes calling themselves socialist.

My point should now be obvious: it is mistaken to call these regimes socialist. This is not a matter of praise or blame, for the simple fact is that these were societies with no basis for socialist experiments, at least as socialism was expounded by its major thinkers. I would classify the African "socialist" regimes more accurately as "populist politocracies." But the particular name is not important so long as the term makes clear that these regimes were based on the power of political classes that, by controlling the state and the army, controlled the economy and society. These regimes were populist in their demagogy, and their populism often entailed—as it does elsewhere—a passionate assertion of tribal or national identity as a substitute for democracy and the slow building of civil society.

In practice, the new postcolonial elites were increasingly preoccupied with fashioning an effective state apparatus to replace the wobbly colonial administrative structures they inherited. They inaugurated continual expansions of the state, which, in turn, required increasing extraction of resources from their societies in order to cover the costs of an ever expanding government bureaucracy that provided jobs for members of the politocracy and their clients. And, of course, the newly developing and swelling armed forces had to be paid for. Little was left for infrastructure, education and social services, let alone job creation. And all this made, as I've mentioned, foreign aid and loans indispensable. Consequently, for all the calls to "mobilization," and for all the battles against the countryside, little genuine development took place. Living standards fell, and skewed centralized development generated a monstrous growth of parasitical cities with no economic functions, but needing to be fed. They can only be fed by a countryside that now needs to be painfully rebuilt. These twin parasites, the swollen city and the expensive government-military establishment, have become an enormous burden that will be difficult to remove or transform.

Yet whatever these governments have been and whatever they will be in the foreseeable future has nothing to do with anything resembling the socialist tradition—Marxist or non-Marxist. Socialism and Marxism, insofar as they were represented by significant movements, were born in the nineteenth century as the radical social and egalitarian wing of revolutionary democracy. They had more in common with the Chartists in England than with the collectivist, scientistic utopias of Saint-Simon. Socialism is not the linear descendant of the Incas or hydrolic Oriental despotisms. Rather it is a legitimate heir of the great democratic revolutions. If it has ambivalent parentage, it is to be found in Babeuf and the *enragés* of the French revolution, not in Sidney and Beatrice Webb's bloodless social-worker-like condescension toward the poor and disenfranchised. That is why it will not do to classify as socialist African, or for that matter any other, repressive politocratic regimes. After all, these

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regimes also insisted that they were "democratic." Would you call them democracies?

It is likely that populist politocracies will develop a new political language, increasingly shedding whatever is left of their claims to be part of the socialist tradition. The nature of the future language is unclear, but it may well be a new type of nationalism and the assertion that there is a unique national path for African countries. In an era of limits, in which international aid is limited, this does not bode well for democratic prospects.

Richard Sklar Replies

As recently as four years ago, no fewer than twenty sovereign states in Africa were governed by rulers in the name of socialism. Had my article identified any two or more of the political economies in those countries as socialist experiments in Africa, it would surely be vulnerable to Bogdan Denitch's gentle, yet firm, criticism. Furthermore, if I had identified any of the celebrated African revolutionary productions of thirty years ago, such as Nkrumah's Ghana, Sékou Touré's Guinea, or Keita's Mali, with socialism, my article would have been justly liable to Denitch's criticism. However, my article states plainly that Julius Nyerere's Tanzania is the one and only significant socialist experiment in modern African history. And I contend that Tanzania's failure to sustain a transition from colonial-era capitalism to socialism is a highly significant episode in socialist thought and practice, one that is of considerable relevance to socialists, and to the future of socialism, everywhere in the world.

I submit that my interpretation of Tanzania's experience under Nyerere as a failed socialist experiment, from which there is much of universal value to learn, is better and more useful than the alternative notion that it should not even be counted as a socialist experiment, nor as one from which socialists have much to learn. It is not scientific to disregard a remarkable episode of socialist endeavor on the a priori ground that "no basis" for a socialist experiment could have existed in the country concerned. By any fair reckoning, the effort made by Nyerere and his followers is entitled to critical respect for both its socialist integrity and its enduring contribution to the history and theory of socialism.

Toward the end of his comment, Denitch sets forth several reasons to believe that socialist construction in Africa has been, and remains, improbable. However, these matters are more complicated than he appears to realize. Viewed differently, they might support conclusions that are not inconsistent with the blend of capitalism, socialism, and democracy that I anticipate for the political economies of Africa. I shall mention three of his contentions, which, in my view, require more subtle analyses by those who may be interested in the future of democratic socialism.

First, what is the basis of his belief that pseudo-socialistic dictators were really motivated by a desire to improve upon "wobbly" administrative structures inherited from the colonial order? Why should anyone accept one of the stock rationalizations of such dictators at its face value? The historical (particularly archival) evidence is mixed.

Second, can my critic be sure that education and social services in postcolonial Africa were starved mainly because scarce resources were wasted on the military and officialdom? Is he prepared to accept, uncritically, the similar analyses of scholars who have little or no interest in socialism itself?

Third, are the "swollen" cities, as he regretfully terms them, merely "parasitical"? In all African countries, from Senegal to South Africa, the so-called "informal economies" of urban and peri-urban areas are frequently dynamic and normally display an immense potential for social creativity as well. Why should socialist thinkers regret urbanization?

Finally, I would not dispute Denitch's contention that the origins of modern socialism are most clearly visible in the histories of democratic movements. Yet it is salutary to reflect that within the socialist movement itself, egalitarianism has always been crowded by those who believe in regulation for its own sake. Apart from my observations on Tanzania, the substance of my article does not oblige me to respond to Denitch's comment, made in passing, that a "repressive politocratic" regime could not be classified as socialist. Yet I do wish to record my respectful disagreement with that opinion. In Africa, as elsewhere, both capitalism and socialism have coexisted with dictatorship. This fact is never questioned with regard to capitalism. A double standard for historical socialism would signify the evasion of a hard truth. □

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Michael Radu

ISLAM AND POLITICS IN BLACK AFRICA

The Growing Impact of Politicized Religion

The growing importance of Islam was made suddenly clear with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent rise of Moslem political activism and religious fundamentalism in countries as disparate as Syria, Sudan, the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics, and Algeria. Far less known and studied is the changing political role of Islam in Africa south of the Sahara, where the overwhelming majority of the continent's peoples live.

African politics and economics are today in a state of flux unknown since the early years of independence, nearly three decades ago. The political impact of Islam is an essential issue. Not only is Islam one of Africa's two dominant religions, but ever since the last century, together with and in competition with Christianity, it has greatly expanded its area of influence at the expense of traditional animistic religions. Furthermore, because African Islam is also in flux, due mostly to the spillover of fundamentalism from the Middle East, its political impact has a significance that goes beyond the domestic politics of any given African state.

A few basic facts about the scope and nature of African Islam are in order if we are to avoid the two most common errors committed by many outside observers, Moslem and non-Moslem alike: that African Islam is nothing but Islam *in* Africa or, conversely, that African Islam is an African (or Africanized) set of religious beliefs that bears only limited similarities to Islam. In fact, African Islam is both African and Islamic. However, it is also more African than orthodox, even as it is today becoming less "African" and more "international" than it has historically been.

Of the forty-five states of sub-Saharan Africa,[1] most have significant Moslem communities and perhaps one-third or more—including giant Nigeria, which itself has one-quarter of sub-Saharan Africa's population—may have a Moslem majority. Throughout the Sahel,[2] Moslems constitute anywhere from an overwhelming majority (as high as 100 percent in Mauritania, some 90 percent in Senegal) to an absolute majority (Mali, Niger, Sudan) to an enormously important plurality (in Chad and, perhaps, Ethiopia). Outside the Sahel and the Horn of Africa (where the entire population of Somalia and Djibouti is Islamic), Moslems are seldom dominant, although significant communities exist in East Africa (Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi), and Islam is the official religion of the Comoros. In southern Africa the only significant Moslem communities are to be found among South Africa's Indians.

This somewhat erratic pattern of population distribution suggests the great diversity and bewildering complexity of African Islam. The Islamic community in each African state has unique characteristics, although certain common features can also be found at the regional level.

In some countries, Islam is closely associated with a particular ethnic group while in others it is not. Throughout the Sahel, for example, race and Islam play related, generally

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reinforcing, roles. Within this region, the northern inhabitants tend to be non-blacks (Berbers, Moors, Arabs, Toubous, Touaregs), who are more devoted to traditional Middle Eastern Islam, with which they retain close links. They are more conservative, and often more economically backward and socially rigid than their southern counterparts. They also tend to regard themselves as superior to the blacks to their south even within the same country, largely due to the blacks' past, though relatively recent, history of being slaves or subjects of the northerners. Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan (but also Zanzibar in East Africa) are all good examples. In such circumstances, racial, cultural, and linguistic differences may acquire a religious dimension through the development of local fundamentalist sects that form along racial or linguistic lines.

Influence of Mysticism

In terms of both theological and practical content and in its institutional structure, sub-Saharan Islam has historically differed from its older and more deeply rooted North African and Middle Eastern counterparts. While it is true that Islam, within both the majority Sunni and minority Shia groups, has developed a tradition of institutionalized mysticism, structured around mystical brotherhoods, called Sufi orders or *taruq* (*tariqa,* singular), their role in Africa is different. Although all Sufi orders in sub-Saharan African Islam are derived from Sunni tradition, they are vastly more important, politically and economically, in Africa than they have ever been in the Middle East.[3]

One important aspect of the *taruq's* role in sub-Saharan Africa is that, from their transplantation to the subcontinent, they have become the main organizational vehicle of black influence in the Islamic community. The development of the *taruq* and the selection of their native leaders on the basis of personal charisma and piety rather than theological scholarship were African responses to Arab (or other non-black) overlordship and the main instrument for the Africanization of Islam.

In West Africa, the various *taruq* differ greatly in origins, beliefs, practices, and leadership; their prominence tends to give West African (and Sudanese) and, to a far lesser extent, East African Islamic institutions a disjointed quality. The political effect of this fragmented organization of Islam on African nationalism is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, the organization of Islam into region-wide *taruq* often militates in most states against the establishment of narrow "national" brands of Islam. Where Muslims are less than a dominant majority, this would seem to benefit a national elite bent on political and economic integration. On the other hand, the cross-national makeup of nearly every *tariqa* can, and often does, reinforce ethnic divisions, thus raising further obstacles to nation-building. But there are significant exceptions. In Senegal an economically dominant and politically active *tariqa*, the Muridiyya (Mourids), is closely associated with the dominant Wollof ethnic group, and thus tends to give rise to a national, if not nationalistic form of Islam. This often seems to be the case in countries that are overwhelmingly Moslem. Indeed, the fact that the Muridiyya leadership has cooperated closely with Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, a Catholic married to a French woman, and with his Socialist party can best be explained by the Mourids' strong national character and confidence. The Senegalese Christians' small numbers only strengthened that confidence. Similarly, in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania the traditional Moslem leaders have supported the government while more recent Islamic groups, influenced by Middle Eastern organizations, have encouraged the opposition. On the other hand, wherever Moslems either are in the minority or perceive a challenge to their dominance, as in Nigeria and Sudan, they tend to be far less tolerant or cooperative with the authorities. This has proven to be the case even in countries where the government has been supported by the traditional *taruq* leadership.

A second, and equally important, difference between sub-Saharan and Middle Eastern Islam is the former's syncretic character, that is, its mixing of orthodox Muslim practices with those of pre-Islamic cults of spirits, demons, local saints, and shamans.[4] Although generally

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recognized as orthodox, that is, Sunni, sub-Saharan Islam, by retaining many pre-Islamic elements, has long remained apart from the Islamic mainstream and has been subjected to occasional doctrinal deviations. Until recently, however, such deviations took politically explosive forms only rarely. Because of its fairly recent and mixed origins, sub-Saharan Islam has long been relatively autonomous and self-contained, and until recently it has remained largely impervious to radical shifts and emotion-laden inducements originating from the outside. The *taruq* on the institutional level and syncretism on the doctrinal and practical one have also served as effective shields against any direct and sudden Middle Eastern fundamentalist influences. But now this balance is facing serious challenges to which African governments and societies will have to respond.

All these changes, and Africa's long-standing vulnerability to external promises, influences, and ideas provide ample opportunities—or pretexts—for other states to interfere in the region under the guise of helping coreligionists. In addition, indigenous extremist groups contribute to instability locally and regionally. These include the Yen Izala sect (followers of the "prophet" Ahmed Marwa "Maitatsine") in northeastern Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger during the early 1980s; the radical wing of the Hamalliyya *tariqa* in Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Burkina Faso; and some Saudi-sponsored Wahhabiya groups throughout West Africa. (Wahhabiya is a form of Islamic fundamentalism that originated in the Arabian peninsula in the eighteenth century.) While these groups cannot be properly equated with the (Sunni) Muslim Brothers (the Ikhwan) in the Middle East in general—Sudan being a conspicuous exception—or to the Shia fanatics of Iran, they are disturbing the already fragile ethnic and racial balance in a number of states, notably Nigeria, Niger, Mali, and Chad.

Impact of Change

It is thus clear that of African Islam's three major characteristics—its close connection with ethnicity and race, its disjointed and politically flexible organization around the *taruq*, and its syncretism, an expression of cultural adaptability—the first has become more virulent and violent (in Sudan, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad), while the other two are sharply challenged everywhere. African Islam, as known for centuries, is rapidly changing under the social, economic, and political pressures of the present—and most of the changes are neither indigenous in nature nor encouraging.

The imposition of Islamic law (Sharia) in Sudan in 1983 reignited the smoldering religious and racial conflict between the Arabic or Arabized North and the Christian or animist black South, a conflict that became intractable as the ruling post-1989 military junta came under the de facto control of fundamentalist Hassan al-Turabi's National Islamic Front (NIF). The NIF is, in fact, the local branch of the Middle Eastern Moslem Brotherhood, strengthened by Iranian money and arms. Symbolic of the changing nature of African Islam, the NIF fundamentalists did not displace a secular, non-Islamic government but one jointly controlled by the relatively tolerant political branches of Moslem Sudan's historic *taruq:* Mahdyya and Khatmyya.

A similar development occurred in Senegal after 1979, when a descendant of one of the important *tariqa* leaders, Ahmed Niasse, advocated (with Libyan and later Iranian money) the establishment of an Islamic party, rejected both the government's socialism, such as it was, and its pro-French policies. Niasse's inflammatory and antisecular fundamentalist rhetoric, as well as his ties to Libya and, particularly, Iran, earned him the nickname of "Ayatollah of Kaolack."

Finally, in northern Nigeria, perhaps sub-Saharan Africa's most dynamic, dangerous, and politically active Islamic region, "Shia" groups have proliferated since the beginning of the 1980s. The term Shia is rejected by those accused, but the combination of their radical rejection of the secular Nigerian state and their close ties with Iran makes the confusion at least understandable. These groups took a violently anti-Christian, anti-Ibo (the main, generally Christian southeastern ethnic group), anti-Western, and anti-government position, mani-

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fested in pogroms against Christians in Bauchi (April 1991), Kano (October 1991), and Katsina (January 1992). Their statements included the outright rejection of the country's constitution and (military, mostly Moslem) government in favor of the universal Islamic community of believers—the *Umma* of the Koran. Furthermore, as in Senegal and Sudan, the fundamentalists' ire was directed against traditional Islamic authorities, accused of cooperating with the government—and their actions resulted in heavy loss of human lives.

Blacks and Arabs

Because they were largely ignorant of both Arabic, the language of the *Quran,* and the intricate theology developed over the centuries in the Middle East, blacks were considered inferior by the Arabs, barely above the level of "unbelievers," and were thus denied any significant role in religious affairs. That al-Turabi holds degrees from England, France, and Egypt suggests that contacts with the West may simply serve to enable fundamentalists to justify their intolerance—in Sudan's case outright racism—in languages familiar to the French, the English, or Americans, but not to their own country's very large racial and ethnic minorities.[5] When Mauritania's Moor majority decided to expel blacks from its southern area, thus coming close to war with Senegal, the government used long-standing Moorish contempt for their former[6] black slaves, the *haratin,* to whip up nationalism—that is, antiblack racism, since the Senegalese are, like most of the *haratin,* black. Northern Arabs, Toubous, and Berbers have consistently rebelled against black-dominated postcolonial governments in Chad, Mali, and Niger. The Touaregs, former drivers of black slaves of the Sahara, are now in open and violent revolt against the majority (black) governments of Mali and Niger.

It is in this historical context that one has to understand the present separatist, regionalist, or religious agitation in sub-Saharan Africa. It is allegedly conducted in the name of minority rights, but in fact on behalf of historical dominance and with the help of foreign (Libyan, Iranian) arms and money.

Sean Spraguel/IMPACT VISUALS

The fundamentalist groups' relatively recent expansion south of the Sahara—most are postindependence phenomena—tends not only to challenge the very nature of Black Africa's Islam as it has developed historically but also to make it less compatible with local traditions and beliefs, thus exacerbating existing ethnic, social, and economic tensions. Furthermore, the fact that the appeal of the "new" sects seems to be strongest among the youth suggests that their impact is a lasting one, just as their appeal to the extremes of the society—intellectuals and the poor—is a clear indication of their political potency. These developments are still not yet common throughout Islamic sub-Saharan Africa, but they can already be seen in countries as different as Nigeria and Sudan, Mauritania and South Africa.

Black Africa's ongoing transition from the postindependence passion for statism and single-party systems and its infatuation with

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Pan-Africanism, nativism, and third-world solidarity is as radical as the similar changes going on in the former "second world," although it is largely missed or neglected by the world at large. These changes are, inevitably, traumatic—and as times inevitably grow more difficult, the popularity and proliferation of outside-sponsored and armed fundamentalism can only be expected to continue. Youths, particularly those from the poorest areas, which often (in Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia) tend to be largely Moslem as well, are attracted to fundamentalism as a magic solution to problems created by their own lack of skills, lower government social expenditures, and what seems to be a new and threatening economic and social order that they neither understand nor accept. It is an order perceived by the Hausa and Fulani Moslem youths of Nigeria's north as favoring southern (and Ibo) Christians and by the Arabized Sudanese as threatening "their" country's unity.

Western (Christian) influence also alienates the same poor youths as it does the sophisticated intellectuals. The anti-Christian pogroms in Katsina, Nigeria were provoked by the missionary activities of a German preacher and there has been substantial public unhappiness expressed by Zambia's Moslems about the recent election of an Evangelical president. On the other hand, governments in most of Africa see Western aid, capitalism, and democracy as the only alternatives to past political and economic failures. Nowhere was this conflict clearer than during the Gulf War, when most African Moslem states supported the anti-Iraq coalition (not surprisingly, Sudan and Mauritania were conspicuous exceptions), but only two (Senegal and Niger) had the courage to actually participate, however symbolically. The reason was not that most Moslems supported Saddam Hussein, but that most of them saw the war as a Western attack against a non-Western, Islamic country. The demonstrations in favor of Baghdad in Niamey (Niger), Kano, and Bamako (Mali) were more anti-Western than "Islamic."

Conflicts on the Horizon

Clearly, conflicts are on the African horizon—between secular politics and a newly radicalized Islam, between economic realities and religious utopias, and between state and Islam (or, where Islam dominates the state, such as in Sudan, between state and large sectors of the population).

Not surprisingly, many African governments, under sectarian pressure, have cracked down hard on the fundamentalists, and have attempted to manipulate traditional Islamic leaders (*ulema, mallam, marabouts*) and symbols against the fundamentalists in support of an "official" view of Islam that is more respectful of secular power. So far, governments have been generally successful in these efforts, not least because traditional African *taruq* leaders feel equally threatened. Concerted interference from outside could, however, deny success in the long term.

Foreign interference in the politics of African Islam should be understood more as an aggravating than a causal factor. Previous Libyan encouragement, Saudi bribes, and, more recently, Iranian organizational skills, money, and slogans have made Islamic religious activism in Nigeria, Sudan, Chad, or Ethiopia, to mention just a few cases, more explosive, but external intrusion did not invent domestic receptivity.

For better or worse, sub-Saharan Africa in general and the Sahel in particular are extremely vulnerable to both subtle and direct external intrusion in their affairs. Arab influence, natural enough in the historical context, is particularly strong. Its manifestations reflect longstanding intra-Arab conflicts. Saudi Arabia (except for its aid to *Wahhabi* groups) and the Gulf states, as well as Egypt since the early 1970s, have tended to support traditional Muslim elites and *taruq* leadership, through university fellowships, financial aid for mosques and Islamic cultural centers, and economic aid to moderate Islamic governments. Libya, on the other hand, after failing to attract support for Colonel Qaddafi's rather unorthodox views on Islam, has been willing to support any group, from Islamic to Marxist, provided it has the potential to destabilize

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countries on Tripoli's list of enemies, particularly Senegal, the Gambia, Chad, and Niger.

Like Libya in the recent past, Iran is now attempting to increase its political influence in sub-Saharan Africa by taking advantage of the strong anti-Western sentiment so common among the young. Like Libya, Iran appears to be far more interested and effective in supporting anti-American and anti-Western regimes than in producing an Islamic fundamentalist revival. Tehran is more and more influential in Africa, but its influence seems opportunistic more than anything else. Iran's hand could be found in al-Turabi's Sunni fundamentalism in Sudan, the pseudo-Shia mobs of northern Nigeria, and just about anywhere antidemocratic, anti-Western (and often anti-Arab) manifestations could be found, regardless of how alien they are to both Persian Shia traditions and Africa's historic Islam.

African Islam has recently lost many of its historic traditions of political adaptability, relative tolerance, and flexibility in favor of a variety of largely exogenous fundamentalist approaches. These serve to exacerbate the deep-rooted problems Africa has inherited since independence. African Islam, which was previously an important element in nation-building efforts and an essential factor in the self-definition of many African states, is—at least in many of its recently politicized forms—threatening now to become an obstacle to both. Increasingly manipulated from outside, reactionary in its political, economic, and social, as well as ethnic and racial attitudes, African Islam is now in danger of becoming part of the problem rather than of the solution. That most of sub-Saharan Africa is seeking new solutions to old problems is obvious, as is the fact that those solutions should come from within Africa. But that principle applies to African Islam as well. □

Notes

[1] The widely accepted although arbitrary definition of "sub-Saharan Africa" includes all African countries but the five mostly Arab ones of the Maghreb: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.

[2] An area making up the non-Maghreb zones of the Sahara desert, its southern reaches, whether desert or savannahs, and extending from Mauritania and Senegal's Atlantic coast in the West through landlocked Mali, Chad, and Niger to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean coast of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

[3] Interestingly, and significantly, ex-Soviet Central Asia has witnessed a similar development, which, as in sub-Saharan Africa, should be seen as a bulwark against fundamentalism.

[4] This phenomenon is not limited to Islam. Christianity has undergone a similar process, as demonstrated by the proliferation of syncretic African churches (such as South Africa's largest, the African Zion Church), which combine old beliefs with the new religion, to the exasperation of the Vatican.

[5] When questioned about the Sharia's imposition of limb-severing penalties for theft, for instance, al-Turabi's response, in perfect French and English, was that it was (regrettably) seldom imposed at all.

[6] Suspicions about the continuing, albeit disguised, existence of slavery in Mauritania still linger.

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Emmanuel Ngara

A LETTER FROM ZIMBABWE

Independent Zimbabwe was born in 1980 on the ruins of Rhodesia. For some fifteen years the guerrillas of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) fought Ian Smith's white government, and their triumph raised hopes that colonialism was finally to be banished from Africa. The last remaining task was to destroy the apartheid system of South Africa and to end Pretoria's illegal occupation of Namibia.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF swept the country's first elections in 1980, and as prime minister he introduced a policy of reconciliation. Blacks and whites who had been locked in battle for so many years were urged to beat their swords into ploughshares and work side by side as members of one nation. This policy took the white population by surprise: they were accustomed to hearing that Mugabe was a Marxist devil. The new prime minister's posture prevented a sudden exodus of whites, which could have led to a serious disruption of the country's economy, which they had controlled.

On the other hand, when the government declared itself "socialist," thereby winning many friends among communist countries and in Africa, it unsettled many white Zimbabweans. Foreign investors also became suspicious, although the government sought vigorously to allay their fears. Much of the socialist talk was in fact rhetorical, and the country's capitalist economy remained virtually intact.

In late 1987 Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Nkomo's PF-ZAPU merged. Mugabe became party leader and also executive president of the country. The unity pact brought to an end dissension between the government and some of Nkomo's supporters, who had retained control of parts of the two Matebeleland provinces, making it virtually impossible for these areas to develop at the same pace as the rest of the country.

Mugabe's government has achieved much in the sphere of social services. Health facilities have been improved for the majority of the people, and there has been an extraordinary expansion of education. At the same time there has not been much economic growth, and the rate of unemployment has risen to disturbing proportions. Fortunately, the country is almost self-sufficient in food so that—save for times of drought—it has to import only items such as rice and wheat. However, there have been shortages of goods such as motor vehicles and electronic equipment. This has resulted in disappointed murmurings in some sections of the population, among them ex-combatants who think that the country's socialist program has not been faithfully implemented.

More recently, the government has adopted a new economic reform program that includes trade liberalization, domestic deregulation, and cuts in recurrent government expenditures. These measures are intended to boost regional and international trade and attract local and foreign investment. The fundamental objective of economic reform in Zimbabwe is to improve living conditions, especially for the poorest groups, according to Harare's 1991 "Framework for Economic Reform." This policy of "structural adjustment" is the brainchild of Bernard Chidzero, senior minister for finance, economic planning and development, and it has the support of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the American government. When Mugabe visited George Bush in July 1991, the American president praised his

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Zimbabwean counterpart for abandoning Marxism-Leninism and for this program of economic reform. The meeting of the two chief executives formally closed an unhappy chapter in U.S.–Zimbabwe ties and led to an American promise of substantial developmental aid. (Relations soured in 1986 after Zimbabwe assumed the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and were aggravated further after a Zimbabwe government minister attacked American policy on South Africa in the presence of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at an American Independence Day celebration.)

Harare's new economic policy was initially widely welcomed by white industrialists, and by adopting it the ruling party seemed to have successfully pulled the rug from under the feet of the opposition parties, giving the impression that ZANU-PF was poised for yet another election triumph at the polls in 1995. Since the beginning of 1992, however, much has happened that has changed the picture considerably. First, white farmers have not been amused by a new land bill that empowers the government to designate land for redistribution. Second, a severe drought has hit the whole region and has adversely affected Zimbabwe's new economic policy, and opposition parties such as Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) and the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole's ZANU (Ndonga) are capitalizing on the new situation. Further, another veteran politician, James Chikerema, seems to be on the verge of launching a new party, posing yet another threat to ZANU-PF.

Among the majority of urban black Zimbabweans, there does not seem to be much enthusiasm for the economic reform. Black Zimbabweans dominate the public sector, and civil servants fear retrenchment. The official position is that only inefficient and unproductive employees need be concerned. Yet there are murmurs that blood is thicker than water: some bureaucrats might victimize employees on ethnic grounds. Also, some socialists complain that "structural adjustment" means that the government has officially said goodbye to socialism: the poor will become poorer and the rich will become richer. The rising cost of essential goods seems to lend credence to this view. Yet some with socialist leanings argue that the economic reform has nothing to do with the abandonment or promotion of socialism, but aims to take the country out of economic stagnation through encouraging economic growth and generating employment.

A discussion of Zimbabwe at this historical moment must consider the country's place alongside a post-apartheid and peaceful Southern Africa. There are today real prospects of peace in nearby Angola, a country that has been engulfed in civil strive since the Portuguese abandoned it in 1974. Mozambique has experienced continuous conflict since the late President Samora Machel closed its borders with Rhodesia in 1976, but the FRELIMO government and leaders of the Mozambique Resistance Movement (RENAMO) are now talking about possibilities of peace. Across Zimbabwe's southern border moves are afoot to bring about a final resolution to the enigma of apartheid.

Zimbabwe is arguably the most economically viable of the ten countries that form the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). In recent years Botswana has proved to be something of a rival because it has experienced an economic boom. With a population of just over a million, this country, which was once regarded simply as an extension of the Kalahari Desert, has benefited enormously from the development of its mineral resources, principally diamond reserves. Zimbabwe has a more sophisticated and more diversified economy, being considerably rich in both agricultural and mineral products. It also has a more advanced industrial base, a better infrastructure, and is a great deal more independent of South Africa than its western neighbor. Zimbabwe's population of over nine million is much larger than that of Botswana, and its education system is superior to that of any of the other members of SADCC. Regional trade has been very much in favor of Zimbabwe, despite shortages of foreign currency and in spite of the fact that its economy has not experienced much growth during the last eleven years.

However, retention of skilled labor has

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become a problem because of Zimbabwe's economic stagnation. Botswana poses a real threat in this regard and has become attractive to professionals. A 1991 study conducted by the present writer and colleagues from the demography unit of the University of Zimbabwe revealed that Zimbabwe has suffered a brain drain since the late 1980s. This includes the loss of many academics leaving the university for greener pastures in the private sector and in other countries. In contrast, Botswana has gone out of its way to retain its own academics and to attract skilled labor from Zimbabwe and other African countries. While there are signs of decline at the University of Zimbabwe, the University of Botswana is gradually becoming a strong and academically attractive institution.

With the prospects of peace in Angola and Mozambique, Zimbabwe could face stiff competition from these two Portuguese-speaking members of SADCC. Both are rich in natural resources and have attractive seaside resorts that might hurt Zimbabwe's growing tourist industry. Despite its relatively developed hotel industry and many tourist attractions, including the famed Victoria Falls and the Great Zimbabwe Ruins—the latter a testimony to great African achievement, independent of Western technology and influence—Zimbabwe has the major disadvantage of being landlocked.

Ironically, however, the greatest threat to Zimbabwe's present political and economic position in Southern Africa is a free and democratic South Africa, which could become a member both of the Commonwealth and SADCC. South Africa's economy is more powerful than that of the ten member countries of SADCC put together and is therefore that much stronger than that of Zimbabwe. Besides, South Africa has all that Zimbabwe can offer plus much more. Its population is well over thirty million; its economy is more diversified and much richer in mineral products; it has a more sophisticated industrial base and a conceivably more developed infrastructure; it is not lacking in beauty spots and has the unique advantage of seaside resorts on the shores of both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. At this moment, however, it has one major disadvantage: it still carries the albatross of apartheid around its neck and is engulfed in political turmoil. Once solutions to these problems are found, two things will happen to the entire Southern African region: first, it will become one of the most attractive regions of the world and the most developed part of Sub-Saharan Africa. Second, South Africa is likely to become a major economic power dominating the entire region and may in the process neutralize the position of relative strength that Zimbabwe has enjoyed. Thus the demise of apartheid will be a mixed blessing for Zimbabwe. Some SADCC states are resentful of Zimbabwe's relative strengths; all will be concerned to temper South African dominance, especially when it joins the SADCC. Consequently, a balanced approach to regional development will be imperative.

By way of brief conclusion, it may be said that Zimbabwe has enjoyed relative political success since independence, and, though it has suffered from economic stagnation during the past decade, it has also avoided the disasters that have plagued many an African country. The success or failure of the government's efforts to revamp the economy is likely to be a major factor determining whether or not Zimbabwe will enter the twenty-first century as a leading African country. Another crucial factor, as we have seen, will be South Africa, for change there will bring change in the balance of forces in the entire region and, indeed, the whole of the African continent. □

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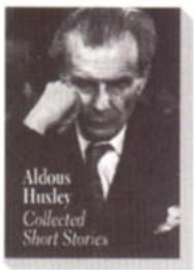

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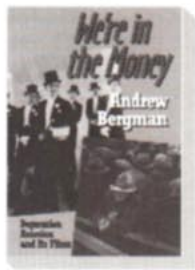

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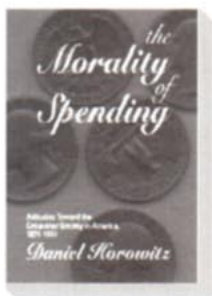

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